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Moscow as Montage and the Experience of the Soviet Modern from 1918 to 1938

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Moscow as Montage and the Experience of the Soviet Modern from 1918 to 1938

by

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Dedication

To my mother, Victoria Michailova

Acknowledgements

I have put off writing the acknowledgement page because it has forced a retrospection I have delayed in order to focus on the necessities of my day to day life. And then my father died and the remainder of what little time I had left to process my intellectual debt went to thinking of him and the last months of his life. Sadly, he did not approve of my efforts to rehabilitate Marxism and I kept the specifics of my dissertation from him. Like many from the former Soviet Bloc, he equated Marxism with his negative experiences in the U.S.S.R. and felt that it failed people. In the end, capitalism was not kind to him either.

As I slowly recover from the series of setbacks of 2016, I am able to process the influences that have touched my life. I have always appreciated rigorous professors who did not shy away from critically evaluating my work. I think of Dr. Martha Peacock, my M.A. advisor and the expectations she had of her students. There is something special to professors who have faith in their students and hold them to higher standards. I count Dr. Campbell Gray among them.

One cannot help but be stirred to follow the ideas put forth in graduate seminars and my initial dissertation topic was inspired by a seminar that I took from Dr. Ann Reynolds. The way that she approaches history is invigorating and creative. I see now how many of her students follow the threads she explores in her classes. There are a few reasons for why I abandoned my original topic. She is not one of them. I do believe that

the current dissertation and the unconventional methodology have traces of her seminar. I hope she sees that.

Dr. Richard Shiff might be surprised to read that his teaching style and by extension, the journey one ought to take in learning and in life, has been so influential to my own. His graduate seminar was always unpredictable; he would come prepared to discuss a set of ideas but allowed his class to be completely derailed by tangential conversations. His breadth of knowledge guided even the most unpredicted terrain. By his example, he showed that critical thinking has no limitations and as professors or just humans, we must embrace this uncertainty and fragility. The "noise" is just as valuable as the choreographed sound.

There are professors for whom I feel a familial affection and they have provided me with a comfort so necessary for the insecurities of graduate life. I owe so much to Dr. Linda Dalrymple Henderson and regret that she may never know the full extent of my gratitude. Along with Dr. Martha Peacock, she is model so few can live up to. As a parent and an academic, she has dealt with responsibilities that I struggle with daily. Long ago while taking a seminar from Dr. Peacock we were required to provide a historiography of a particular artist. I had chosen Kazimir Malevich. Among our duties was to identify a research history of each scholar and to contact them. Long before I decided to attend the University of Texas at Austin, I called Dr. Henderson to discuss her article on Malevich as part of my assignment. I recall how gracious she was during my interview. Little did I know then that I would get to know her in person and find her to

be as generous in person as she was on the phone. I struggle to find the words to properly thank her for the invaluable editing and the time she has taken to insure that my defense runs smoothly.

I would also like to thank Dr. Mark Magleby for his continued friendship and support.

Dr. Joan Neuberger and Dr. Danilo Udovichki-Selb's knowledge of all things Soviet has been invaluable. I was first exposed to Dziga Vertov in Dr. Neuberger's class on Russian films and was immediately enamored with his *Man with a Movie Camera*. I have always loved film, but had never heard of Dziga Vertov until I took her class. She is also the only person on my committee who experienced what I call the summer of hell during Moscow's record heat wave in 2010. We went to different archives that summer but I can picture her sitting in hot and stuffy rooms followed by suffering through the nights that offered no relief from the heat and smog of burning peat.

Dr. Udovichki-Selb is an expert in the field I desire to occupy. Apart from his extensive knowledge of architecture, both practical and theoretical, he is a remarkable human being. His gentle nature and kindness are endearing. Even the way he signs his emails: "yours," I perceive to be a token of communion and generosity. This may not be the proper forum to say that I wish we were related, but there it is. I have been fortunate, indeed.

My research is informed by several institutions and I would like to acknowledge the staff that really stood out. Doing archival research in Russia is intimidating, but once

I passed the formal procedures, including armed guards, I found passionate and receptive employees. At the film and photo archive in Krasnogorsk (RGAKFD) I would particularly like to thank Galina Viktorovna who remained enthusiastic and helpful even in the stuffy and hot photo viewing room. Natalia Nikolayvna assisted in the film viewing room. I would like to acknowledge Pavel Kuznetsov then interim director of the Shchusev Architecture Museum in Moscow. He is genuinely interested Moscow's architectural history and I found him delightful and accommodating. I am grateful to Maria Grigoriev Rogozina for her diligence and for her insights of Modern Moscow, having worked with numerous historians over the years in the photo archives at Shchusev Architecture Museum.

I would like to thank my friends and family who urged me to "just do it." My Pierre has been patiently waiting for me to finish and I am grateful for his insights and critiques. He never allowed me to slide into lazy definitions or perspectives. Our ongoing debates have kept me alert and intellectually satisfied. It is a mark of true friendship when your friends read your drafts and help edit them for free. For that, I thank Tiffany Nez for the hours she spent laboring over unpronounceable words and a text so outside her academic interests. She has been a remarkable friend. As long as my son can remember, I have been working on my dissertation. I hope he sees that some projects require resilience, especially when the tedium of details overtake the project.

Finally, I would like to thank my mother. She accompanied me on research trips to Russia, serving as an invaluable translator to technical terms that are beyond my everyday Russian. She was there with me during the hottest summer on record, getting

up day after day to take the metro, followed by the long bus ride to Krasnogorsk, sit there for hours, then return to an apartment baked in the summer heat. She sat beside me in hot stuffy rooms of the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg reading newspapers and journals from the 1920s and 1930s. Without her Soviet style diplomacy, we would never have had the access that was granted to us at Main Moscow Archives: Department of Utilities and Planning of Moscow. In the end, it is because of her and for her that I complete this project.

Moscow as Montage and the Experience of the Soviet Modern from 1918 to 1938

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2017

Co-Supervisors: Richard Shiff; Danilo Udovichki-Selb

In order to reinvent Moscow into a site of revolutionary spectacle, the Bolsheviks undertook a deeply contested ideological, imaginary, and physical refashioning of Moscow over a period of two decades. El Lissitzky described the transformation in 1929, noting that streets and squares have had to adjust to the entirely new traffic rhythms and to new possibilities of function and use. In addition he recognized, "The introduction of new building types into the old fabric of the city affects the whole by transforming it." [1] I examine how streets and squares changed to reflect a new psychology of Moscow. My project considers how modernist architecture was incorporated into the existing dynamic of the city street and how it affected the nature and function of the street. I propose that modernist structures functioned as cues within the city, confronting the passerby with a dialectical engagement between both architectural forms and urban function in order to awaken the slumbering masses, similar to the desire of filmmakers who used montage for the same purpose. Given the fact that architects were aware of and engaged with the surrounding architecture, and understood that the environment had the potential to determine behavior and psychology, it is surprising that studies of Moscow have not analyzed the relationships between the buildings and the city streets as a whole, nor the perception of the inhabitants. I hope to correct this oversight by offering a

[1] El Lissitzky, *Russia: An Architecture for World Revolution,* trans. Eric Dluhosch (Cambridge: the MIT Press, 1986), 52.

comprehensive urban framework. Important to my study is the interpretation of the city streets and how the modernist structures were perceived. Responses varied widely within the public and intellectual communities; the fact that these modernist structures were classified as "individualistic" sometimes "proletarian" and even "utopian" points to competing definitions of what constitutes Soviet modernist architecture. The debates between the numerous architectural organizations suggest a complex approach to the challenges of reinventing the social and physical space of the socialist city. I argue that underlying all of these competing interpretations is a desire for a dialectical engagement not just with theory but also with the material presence of space.

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A Note on Transliteration

I have followed the Library of Congress' guide for transliteration save for a few exceptions of well-known figures. Among the common endings one encounters in Russian are:

ЙӢ= ii (exception for Kandinsky and El Lissitzky)

Я=aia (Sovremennaia)

ЫІ=ye, y (Mosvye, byt)

ШІ=Sh (Kuleshov)

ЦІ=Ts (Tsentrosoyuz)

ЖІ=Zh (Zhaltovskii)

ЩІ=Shch (Shchusev)

ЮІ=Ju (Miljutin)

Introduction

Confronting the Dialectic

Anyone familiar with downtown St. Petersburg and its architectural ensemble will know how uniformly decorative and colorful the city is. But on the corner of Ulitsa Bolshaya Moskovskaia and Ulitsa Razzyezhaia stands a "functional" building, as if in protest to beauty. It is odd, not because of any peculiar embellishments, but because it is void of them. Instead of the familiar, organic shapes of Roccoco or sober Neoclassicism that define the city, this building is emphatic with its angularity and repetition, with fenestration set on a grid with poorly placed air-conditioning units. Its blatant functionalism is like a rude agitator, interrupting the flow of polite society. Why, we might ask, would an architect and building commission allow such an ugly anomaly within the historic center? The answers might be banal and offer economic expediency to justify the decision, but what if its ugliness or incongruence was intentional? The goal of my dissertation is, in fact, to offer an explanation for such agitational interruptions, common to Soviet modernist architecture in the decades after the 1917 Revolution. I argue that the antagonism created by the architectural "interruptions" ought to be regarded within the framework of dialectical materialism—then the official doctrine of the Soviet Marxists.[2]

[2] Joseph Stalin stressed that change and antagonism are inherent to nature, noting, "Contrary to metaphysics, dialectics holds that nature is not a state of rest and immobility, stagnation and immutability, but a state of continuous movement and change. . . ." For the full elaboration of Stalin's ideas on dialectical materialism, see his pamphlet *Dialectical and Historical Materialism* (New York: International Publishers, 1940). Quotation is on page 7. Original text was written in 1938.

Dialectical materialists consider contradictions and flux as inherent to material reality. Additionally, they hold the view that phenomena are interdependent and connected. Revealing this reality was evident in experimental film, and I contend it was also manifest in urban planning and architecture. El Lissitzky, for example, considered life and organic growth along the dialectical process of both the "yes" (plus) and the "no" (minus). He believed, "Thus on the basis of existing . . . an ideology is formed representing a definite view of life and leading to certain interpretations and interrelationships which, in turn, affect further growth. The development of our architecture reflects this dialectical process."[3]

Recently a student of mine, who has been reading Robert Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (1966), asked how we know the difference between bad architecture and intentionally bad architecture. Good question. He pointed to an example of Michelangelo's rear façade of *St. Peter's* that Venturi used to show a "contradiction" in architecture, wherein a horizontal window works against viewer's expectations of a vertical window. It is an odd use of windows, to be sure. I pointed out that architecture is not accidental, even setting up a tent requires some sort of planning. The materials involved and the negotiation of space is far more complex for an accidental

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[3] El Lissitzky, *Russia: An Architecture for World Revolution*, 68. For now, I am putting aside the discussion of the differing views of dialectical materialism. But as a teaser, the Marxist Situationist, Guy Debord rejected the unity of fragmentation as a struggle between two conceptions of the world of those who are for the materialist dialectic and those who are against. He quotes from a Chinese publication *Red Flag* (1964): "Those who maintain that, 'one divides into two' is the fundamental law of things are on the side of the materialist dialectic; those who maintain that the fundamental law of things is that 'two fuse into one' are against the materialist dialectic." For the full quote see Guy Debord's *The Society of Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1995), 35.

span of a window. The second point that I made was that Michelangelo had been experimenting and deviating from predictable Renaissance formulas in his sculpture and painting, suggesting an intentional, if not necessarily "rational" use of space. The odd window, like his later works, rejects ideal harmonies for the sake of drama.

Art historians and architects understand that context matters, that the site informs the work and the work informs the site. A small horizontal window, for example, set against a vertical one exaggerates their respective proportions; a squat building set against a skyscraper produces a similar effect and affect. As aesthetic objects in space, architectural forms are informed by the space they occupy and are read in that context. This is not only true of art objects in a gallery but even more so of structures within the fabric of a city. Soviet city planner and economist, Nikolai Miljutin, boldly confirmed in his essay "On theories of Soviet architecture" (1933) that, "*A thing does not exist without its relativity to another thing.*"[4]

Moscow is not unique in *architextual* and dynamic disruptions, and so it is important to distinguish poor city planning, or architectural indifference, from the intentional intervention of a city site. Such contrasts exist throughout the city, and yet historians fail to consider the sensitivity of the architects to the preexisting architecture, isolating the architectural examples like discrete objects in outer space. I contend that ideological factors, including Agit art and film, influenced modernist architects, and thus

[4] Nikolai Miljutin, "Osnovnye voprossi teoreii sovetskoii arhitektury" in *Sovetskaia Arhitektura*, no. 2 (1933): 10. Miljutin's comment obviously predates Stalin's *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*, suggesting these ideas on dialectical materialism were already in circulation by 1938.

their modernist designs were intentional and dialectical, rather than mere adherents to trends or flagrant disregard for existing buildings.

Few would argue that political and geographic contexts do not matter; it is the scale of the context that is difficult to determine. When we speak of geography, do we speak of Russia, or a city, or a street? Likewise, when we speak of politics do we speak of all socialists, or specific socialists? I chose the vastness of a particular city—Moscow—rather than the familiarity of St. Petersburg precisely because I believe in the perimeters of my project; Moscow was special. The goals for Moscow were unique among European cities, including those within the U.S.S.R. As the new model capital of the U.S.S.R. and socialism, urban planning and architecture took on more rigor and scrutiny.

The political and social circumstances particular to Soviet Moscow frame my research; after all, one could hardly imagine applying a colonialist ideology to Moscow—a crude but informative example.[5] Nor do I consider phenomenology, an approach that heavily populates scholarship of the urban experience, applicable. And while this approach is appealing, Soviet architects and theorists were not engaged in phenomenology. The interest in the embodied viewer had little to do with Edmund

[5] Naturally, colonial architecture would be abhorred by Marxists for its emblems of privilege and foreign domination. Wrong as it may be from a Marxist standpoint, Marx would account for such architecture on the premise that material conditions inform cultural production. As long as colonialist power is the ruling ideology, the architecture and culture is subject to it.

Husserl or Martin Heidegger, but rather, with Karl Marx, and Friedrich Engels.[6] Perception, after all, is slave to ideology, so too the embodied self (especially so, if you are a Marxist). I have worked to ground my views within the perception of cities particular to the Marxists. It is their approach to culture that informs my method and one that I consider to be legitimate in understanding Soviet cultural output.

Historians view Baron Georges-Eugène Haussmann's Paris as a model of a bourgeois metropolis, or New Delhi as an exemplar of colonialism; does Moscow qualify as a socialist city based on its architectural reconstruction? What determines a bourgeois city, apart from the underlying political regime? Does it have distinct features of a class such as those Walter Benjamin located in the arcades of Paris? If so, a socialist city would surely have a distinct footprint.

The reader may sense my affinity with Walter Benjamin. I have always found his view of modernity compelling. He was hopeful and thoughtfully critical of its manifestation. His arcades project of Paris has loosely inspired my archaeology of Moscow. The complexity of his arcades project still eludes me and I suspect it has a substructure that I cannot yet fathom. Perhaps the puzzling nature of his enterprise functioned precisely as he intended: to awaken the reader. As interesting as Benjamin's views of Paris and other cities were, alone, they would be insufficient as a guide for understanding the architectural landscape of Moscow in the 1920s and 1930s. Perhaps

[6] Cognitive science posits its own theories of perception and I want to acknowledge that such studies are relevant in contemporary definitions of perception. While contemporary views, aided by brain imaging, are valuable for us today, there were obvious limits to the science in the 1920s and 30s. Nevertheless, see: http://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2016/04/the-illusion-of-reality/479559/ for new perspectives of cognitive realities.

even more than Benjamin, it was Dziga Vertov's film *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) that helped crystalize the direction I would take with Moscow.[7] Soviet experimental films helped me to see the viewers' perceptual experience, not only the audience watching the film, but also the filmmakers'. Even before Benjamin, Dziga Vertov saw a possibility of awakening the reader or viewer from the dreamworld engendered by the material conditions of their lives with a juxtaposition of images, referred to as montage. A collection of facts and events without the authoritative narrative also defines Benjamin's arcades project. Vertov outlines his goals at the beginning of *Man with a Movie Camera* as an "experiment in cinematic communication" and, like Benjamin, who did not provide an overarching narrative, Vertov creates a film without intertitles. The viewer and reader, in both cases, must assemble the disjointed pieces—a cumbersome yet illuminating exercise. Vertov and Benjamin believed that the reader or viewer was capable of comprehending the seemingly incoherent assembly, but more so, this process empowered the reader/viewer.[8] In the spirit of Vladimir Lenin, Dziga Vertov, Walter Benjamin and other Marxists of their generation, I claim that the desire to awaken the masses by

[7] The origins of *Man with a Movie Camera* predate Benjamin's arcades project. Vertov's brother Mikahil Kaufman who worked on *Man with a Movie Camera* made a documentary film *Moscow* in 1927. The film has the groundwork that would mature in *Man with a Movie Camera*. Though Benjamin began work on his arcades project in 1927, he did not return to it in full until 1934. See "Translator's Foreword" in Walter Benjamin's *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), ix-x.

[8] The comprehension level and reviews of *Man with a Movie Camera* varied. In a discussion at the Society of Friends of Soviet Cinema (made up of factory workers and journalists) the speakers praised the formal qualities of the film, noting Kaufman's exceptional camera work and the film's contribution to cinema, but criticized the lack of "authenticity" of showing real life. For the discussion, see Vak-Zal, "Chelovek s kinoapparatom (na disputakh)," *Kino* undated clipping [1929] RGALI 2091-1-90. Reprinted in *Lines of Resistance: Dziga Vertov and the Twenties*, ed. Yuri Tsivian, trans. Julian Graffy (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 321-322.

dialectical relationships ought to be taken into consideration when analyzing modernist architecture in Moscow during the 1920s and 1930s.

In the first chapter, I trace the struggle that revolutionaries faced in determining a "socialist" aesthetic. Soviet artists and architects were initially drawn to the artistic trends from Paris to Milan and the experimentation with form therein. Eventually this debt to the West and experimentation with pure form appeared inauthentic or an "artificial cultural fashion."[9] Soviet art and architecture would have to be grounded in specific *national* conditions.[10] As I point out in chapter one, the idea of some national style was subject to vehement debates that predated the revolutionaries and would not be resolved after the revolution. Most importantly, art and architecture had to reflect and arise from the working class, as Lenin proclaimed: "Art belongs to the people."[11] The prolific cultural critic, Boris Arvatov attempted to explain in "The Proletariat and Leftist Art" (1922), what it means for art to belong to the people, stating that proletarian art, "to its very marrow, is bound indissolubly with life, evolving with it and deriving from it."[12]

[9] Lenin and his inner circle saw the various avant-garde movements as trendy and superficial. See, Zetkin, *Reminiscences of Lenin* (New York: International Publishers Co., Inc., 1934), 12-13.

[10] Russia has had a complicated history with Western influence and desired to be included in the dialogue with Western modern movements, hoping to hold C.I.A.M. (Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne) in Moscow once the changes of a newly created Union of Architects were finalized. See Danilo Udovichki-Selb, "The Evolution of Soviet Architectural Culture in the First Decade of Stalin's `Perestroika'" *Trondheim Studies in East European Culture & Societies*, no. 28 (January, 2009): 40-41.

[11] Zetkin, *Reminiscences of Lenin*, 13. It is fair to assume that Lenin was not speaking about *all* people, but the mass proletariat.

[12] Boris Arvatov's "The Proletariat and Leftist Art, 1922" is reprinted in *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde Theory and Criticism 1902-1934*, ed. John E. Bowlt (New York: The Viking Press, 1976), 225-230. The quote comes from page 226. Arvatov, as far as he was concerned, had not yet seen a trace of proletariat art when he wrote the article in 1922.

Again, the nature of that aesthetic was unclear and changes in style reveal the uncertainty as to how socialist art ought to appear. Previously, less frequently now, there was a tendency to regard the shift in aesthetics from the 1920s to the 1930s as a reflection of Stalin's taste, but this conclusion ignores the genuine debates on aesthetics that are evident in contemporary publications. Architects were not only faced with the uncertainty of what a socialist aesthetic ought to be, but were also confronted by the practical challenges of addressing the urgent housing crisis, while reinventing Moscow as the model socialist capital. Their struggle underscores that a socialist aesthetic is not easily defined nor should it be eternally circumscribed within a set of stylistic features. Rather, a socialist aesthetic ought to reflect the indeterminate and fluid material conditions that determine life.

The second chapter considers the scholarship that continues to view Soviet avant-garde art and architecture as a utopian experiment. I challenge this designation of "utopian socialism" on the evidence that Lenin clearly rejected it as he cautioned against "dreamy" thinking.[13] The post-revolutionary rhetoric was sober as the efforts of Soviet architects and city planners could never meet the needs of the growing population, noting lack of material shortages at every turn.[14] Some could argue that such a desire to catch-up, to always struggle to respond adequately to the housing needs of the population was foolhardy and utopian. But this assumption entails that social conditions are intractable.

[14]For one, see Valentina Semenova, "Nasha srochnaia zadacha," *Arhitektura* no. 1 (1923): 28-29.

We need only remember the 1989 tombstone that pronounced the end of communism. Fait accompli conclusions shortsightedly disregard the continuing processes that complicate social and political structures. I point to what I see as a similar parallel of insular perspectives in architectural studies that fail to recognize that buildings are situated on a street with other buildings, parking lots, parks, factories, in other words, the entire urban infrastructure. Even Stalin recognized that, "no phenomenon in nature can be understood if taken by itself, isolated from surrounding phenomena. . . ."[15]

Revolutionary gestures do not necessarily follow predictable and stable forms, and therefore, it is important to take notice of the periphery, not just socially but also spatially. This fact is important to consider especially, in so far as evidence shows, that architects, who were redesigning Moscow, were cognizant of and took into consideration proximity to factories, tram lines and worker housing.[16] To make this point, I detail in chapter three the ongoing communication between the architect Boris Velikovskii and P. A. Mamatov, the governing city engineer, suggesting that architects had to be conscious of city codes, including aesthetics. Such sensitivity to context is not consistent with mere utopian thinking.

Also in the third chapter, I concentrate on concrete examples—the buildings. There are numerous examples of unremarkable buildings built throughout Moscow during the 1920s and 1930s that I do not address. Even noteworthy, culturally

[15] Joseph Stalin, *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*, 7.

[16] See Moisej Ginsburg and Mikhail Barchsh, "Green City," *Konstruktzye Moskvye*, no. 1 (1930): 14-19.

significant, examples are not featured in the dissertation, primarily to avoid redundancy with existing scholarship. The examples that I do use, I believe, are sufficient in demonstrating the dialectical tension that existed between modernist structures and their neighbors. I concentrate on architects who best exemplify the "modern" aesthetic: Boris Velikovskii, Vesnin brothers (Aleksander, Viktor and Leonid), Il'ia Golosov, Grigoii and Mikhail Barkhin and Konstantin Mel'nikov. I consider how their buildings were situated within the city and the relationship that was created with their surroundings.

Chapter Four traces early 20th-century views of the city, particularly those of Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin and Lazar Kaganovich. I make use of their views to consider the function and psychology that would be created by modernist sites and their dialectical relationship to adjoining buildings. Moscow inhabitants were habitually confronted by changes in the city, including demolition and reconstruction. Sites that were once holy became worker clubs, and churches were removed for the metro. I argue that such changes must have created a sense of *ostrannenia*[17] or dislocation that would "awaken" the inhabitants from their unexamined lives.[18] The notion of *ostrannenia* was not new to architects or filmmakers. They had inherited and participated in agitational

[17] The term was coined by the Soviet formalist and literary theorist Viktor Shklovsky. Shklovky believed that language, particularly poetry, had the potential to resurrect the sensation of the world. His method and views are explained in "The Resurrection of the Word, (1914)" reprinted in *Russian Formalism: A Collection of Article and Texts in Translation* eds. Stephen Bann and John Bowlt, trans. Richard Sherwood (Edinburg: Scottish Academic Press, 1973), 41-47.

[18] Vladimir I. Lenin believed that the working class movement required a conscious mass. He saw, however, that the general masses were "slumbering, apathetic, bound by routine, inert and dormant." His description comes from "'Left-Wing' Communism, and Infantile Disorder" in *On Utopian and Scientific Socialism: Article and Speeches* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965), 186.

art.[19] In their view, art had the potential to transform subjectivity, especially with the use of dialectical engagement.

Chapter five is an assembly of accounts of Moscow from foreign delegates, philosophers, architects and filmmakers. Accounts are both optimistic and sober. I focus on cinematic depictions of Moscow, particularly montage, as it was felicitous to the everyday experience of the city dweller. Montage had been the mainstay of Russian avant-garde filmmaking from Lev Kuleshov to Dziga Vertov. The juxtaposition of images, inherent in montage, is by its nature a dialectical experience. Viewers are forced to assemble the disjointed images into meaningful experience, the way they do with a cityscape in everyday life. Film appears the perfect conduit to express such everyday, peripatetic experiences; both architects and filmmakers understood this. As such, experimentation with film, especially montage, serves as a laboratory for understanding the inchoate, fragmented, and antagonistic aspects of everyday city life. Ultimately, I argue that modernist buildings ought to be understood within the same dialectical framework that was used by filmmakers, in order to rouse the slumbering masses.[20] In the end, an architecture of experiential fragmentation, antagonism and uncertainty was

[19] Anatolii Lunacharskii, as an example, expressed in "Revolution and Art" (1920-22) that agitational art can be "distinguished from propaganda by the fact that it excites the feelings of the audience and readers and has a direct influence on their will." For more on Lunacharskii's view on art see the reprinted in *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde Theory and Cricticism 1902-1934*, ed. John E. Bowlt (New York: The Viking Press, 1976), 190-196.

[20] The process of awakening is shown explicitly in Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera*, wherein the city and its inhabitants are shown sleeping. The metaphor of a city asleep comes to be equated with the phantasmagoria of modernity whereby material reality is obscured by the state of collective unconsciousness, a result of commodity fetishism. Karl Marx and his readers including Walter Benjamin believed the dialectical method would lead to a historical awakening.

ultimately, the only coherent form of socialist aesthetic expression in the early Soviet state.[21]

[21] It should be noted that fragmentation as a visual form is also identified with Socialist Realism. See, Augustin Ioan's, "A Postmodern Critic's Kit for Interpreting Socialist Realism" in *Architecture and Revolution: Contemporary Perspectives on Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Neil Leach (London: Routledge, 1999), 63. He identifies the use of fragmentation, pastiche and collage in Socialist Realism but does not see it as an expression of dialectical materialism. Instead, he considers its use as regressive and conservative. I do not share this investment in defining the socialist aesthetics to particular forms, nor how they are progressive or regressive.

Chapter One

Moscow as Construct

"Moscow will be a laboratory that all of the Soviet Union will come and study as the Socialist Experience." Lazar Kaganovich 1931[22]

On March 12, 1918 the Communist Party relocated the capital of Russia from Petrograd to Moscow to underscore the radical change in the new political regime and usher in a new social order. In order to reinvent Moscow into a *sotsgorod*[23] of revolutionary spectacle, Bolsheviks, artists, architects, and theorists embarked upon a deeply contested ideological, imaginary, and physical refashioning of the city. Aleksei Shchusev, the architect of Lenin's mausoleum reflected on the challenges facing architects, "The new conditions of life, new tastes, new ideals and aspects of view, all these must be reflected in architecture."[24] Such an objective is best understood in light of the theoretical and pragmatic concerns that faced these so called builders of the future. Though, as it will become obvious in the chapter, this directive did not have clear outlines, leading to factions within the competing architectural groups. In the end, and in

[22] The quote is from a speech given in June 1931. Lazar M. Kaganovich, "Za sotzilesticheskuyou rekonstruktzeii Moskvye i goroda SSSR."(For Socialist Reconstruction of Moscow and Cities in the USSR) *Pererabotannaia stenogramma doklada na ejunskom plenume TSK VKP*. (Moskva: Ogiz: Moskovskii Rabochii (1931), 15. Translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

[23] *Sotsgorod* was a term used by Nikolai Miljutin in his *The Planning of Socialist Towns* (1933). Aleksander Pasternak and Leonid Sabsovich used it in their debates. Anna Abraham uses the term in her documentary: *Sotsgorod: Cities for Utopia (1995).* It is an abbreviation of "socialist city."

[24] Aleksei Shchusev's quote comes from his article "Ot Moskovskogo Arhitekturnogo O-va," in the first issue of *Arhitektura* no.1. 1-2 (1923): 1. See also Hugh D. Hudson, Jr. *Blueprints in Blood* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), 20.

my view, it is precisely within such tense debates, where hegemony is contested, that the modern is to be located.

It is easy to forget how challenging it is to articulate "new" aesthetic expressions of ideas and ideologies. We only recognize, with the hindsight of history that something appears revolutionary or avant-garde, missing the miniscule details and deliberations that led from ideological convictions to various formal innovations. Soviet debates over aesthetics demonstrate the difficulty of locating the "revolutionary" in art. The questions these debates raised concerned the type of formal qualities that defined the new and revolutionary society. Was it enough for art to be descriptive of revolutionary politics, simply depicting crowds of workers, for example? Or was revolutionary art a break from traditional, realist representation—a kind of independent object or practice with its own intrinsic properties that break with past conventions, if that is even possible.[25] Anatolii Lunacharskii, the culturally ubiquitous Commissar for Enlightenment, considered that "true perfection of form, is determined, obviously, not by pure formal search, but by the presence of an appropriate form common to the whole age, to all the masses. . . ."[26]

How, for example, does an architect suggest socialist or capitalist ideals and do those ideals have regional differences? Is excess always a crime and a sign of bourgeois degeneracy, even the filigree on a peasant's hut? While a peasant's home in the Novgorod regions might exemplify national and peasant taste, could its reiteration in

[25] I think of icon painting as the anti-materialist example, in that they were not intended as mimetic versions of the world as is, but as prompts to higher realms.

[26] Lunacharskii, "Revolution and Art," 191.

Moscow suggest the same values? Consider, for example, *Pogodisnkaya Izba*, (1850s) a wooden mansion built in Moscow by Nikita Nikitin for a Slavophile (fig.1). Although it is influenced by peasant architecture, its decorative excess is the stuff of fairy-tales, hardly the reality of an urban worker or even a common peasant. Though Moscow still had a significant number of wooden homes in the 1920s-1930s[27], peasant handiwork was not a pragmatic reality outside the context of the village and peasant life. In fact, as seen by the image provided in William Brumfield's *The Origins of Modernism in Russian Architecture*, *Pogodisnkaya Izba* looks incongruous with the square and minimal geometry of the building behind it.

To the chagrin of Soviet cultural theorists, there was no clear aesthetic outline for socialist art; indeed, even classicism was deemed proletarian.[28] Lunacharskii lamented:

> We are very poor in aesthetic literature. And not just we Russian Communists, but Marxism in general. Marx and Engels themselves left only isolated, more or less, uncoordinated observations. Of course, they supplied their great method [dialectical materialism], which points the way—though a way into still unexplored territory.[29]

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[27] *Vechernaia Moskva* (Evening Moscow), May 15, 1924.

[28] Andrei Ikonnikov, *Russian Architecture of the Soviet Period,* trans. Lev Lyapin (Moscow: Raduga Publishers, 1988), 79-82. Ivan Fomin's inspiration in French classicism was viewed as "proletarian classicism." After all, Jacques Louis-David was deemed the quintessential artist of the French revolution and the neo-classicist par excellence.

[29] Lunacharskii,'s quote is found in Anatolii Senkevich , Jr's dissertation *Trends in Soviet Architectural Thought, 1917-32: The Growth and Decline of the Constructivist and Rationalist Movements* (Cornell University, 1974), 16. Lunacharskii's preface is found in Vladimir Vol'kenstein's *Opetye sovremennoi*

Aleksei Gan, concurred with Lunacharskii, stating "Dialectical materialism is for constructivism a compass that indicates the paths and distant objectives of the future."[30] To summarize, "dialectical materialism became a vast filing-cabinet the particular compartment of which were still waiting to be filled with appropriate studies."[31] Indeed.

The challenge for artists and architects was to locate the aesthetic qualities of communism, assuming communism even has formal aesthetic features. In fact, as A. Mihailov wrote in *Sovetskaia Arhitektura* (1931) "For proletarian architects, it is evident that no eternal laws in architecture exist" or should exist, otherwise they become a petrified ideal.[32]As Lunacharskii noted, Marx's theory of art is fragmentary and incomplete, leaving little guidance for architects and artists to work with.[33] While Lenin understood that art provided an aide for "cognition of the world," he was, however, reluctant or felt ill-equipped to guide artists and architects towards a formal style, seeing himself as a "barbarian."[34] In addition, Lenin's taste in art was "conservative" and he had little interest in involving himself directly in what style ought to represent the Soviet

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estetiki (Moscow-Leningrad: Academia, 1931), 7. Senkevich's research is invaluable and used by all the sources studying Soviet art and architecture.

[30] Excerpts from Aleksei Gan's *Konstruktivizm (1922)* are reprinted in Stephen Bann, ed., *The Tradition of Constructivism* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 1990), 41.

[31] Victor Erlich's rewording of Alfred Kazin in *Russian Formalism: History-Doctrine* (The Hague: Mouton, 1969), 115-116.

[32] A. Mihailov, "Vopra-ASNOVA-SASS" in *Sovetskaia Arhitektura,* no. 1-2 (1931): 41-54.

[33] This reflects the opinion of Iu. P. Denike in *Iskusstvo,* no. 1. (1923): 32.

[34] Zetkin, *Reminiscences of Lenin*, 12-13. Lenin's insecurities towards comprehending the arts is also reflected in Lunacharskii's recollection of Lenin in "Lenin and the Arts" in V. I. Lenin, *On Culture and Cultural Revolution,* 241-261.

ideology.[35] His only caution was that proletarian culture is not defined by the so-called experts of proletarian culture.[36] Lenin's subtle slight to any groups claiming aesthetic authority made it more difficult to identify or claim any particular style of the revolution or communism. It is under these uncertain terms that classicism could be considered a viable example of the peoples' taste and recast as "proletarian classicism." Having little to no direction from Marx and Lenin may account for the varied approaches and conceptions of a socialist aesthetic produced in Russia in the early years after the revolution.

The lack of involvement in aesthetic issues by party leaders led to genuine frustration within the avant-garde communities who believed that art also had to undergo a revolution, rather than cling to the past.[37] Architect and theorist Moisej Ginzburg acknowledged this challenge in identifying revolutionary aesthetic values and surmised in the beginning of his third chapter of *Style and Epoch:*

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[35] Lenin exposes his views in the privacy of his apartment in the Kremlin,"I have the courage to show myself a `barbarian.' I cannot value the works of expressionism, futurism, cubism, and any other `isms' as the highest expressions of artistic genius. I don't understand them. They give me no pleasure." Lenin's words are recalled by Clara Zetkin, in her *Reminiscences of Lenin,* 12-13. Lenin's views on art were no secret. Dziga Vertov who wanted to align his methodology with Lenin, saying, "Long live the first *kinoc*, the leader of the Communist Party, Vladimir Illich Lenin, who did not understand and did not want to understand art. . . ." excerpt is reprinted in *Lines of Resistance: Dziga Vertov and the Twenties*, 152. Original excerpt from ca. 1928 found in RGALI 2091-2-205.

[36] Senkevich, *Trends in Soviet Architectural Thought, 1917-32: The Growth and Decline of the Constructivist and Rationalist Movements*, 26, takes the quote from Lenin's "Zadachi soiuzov molodezhy" in V.I. Lenin *O literature i isskustvye*, 443. Lenin presumably made the statement at the 1920 Congress of the Young Communist League. I have read the "Zadachi souizov molodshy" but cannot locate the particular quote. It would be fair to say that it is the gist of the speech, encouraging the youth to educate themselves, and to be aware of the forces that lead them.

[37] Senkevich, *Trends in Soviet Architectural Thought, 1917-32: The Growth and Decline of the Constructivist and Rationalist Movements*, 62.

> A new style does not emerge all at one. It begins in various facets of human life, which frequently are totally unrelated to one another. The old is regenerated gradually; frequently one can observe how elements of the old world, still persisting by reason of traditions that have outlived the very ideas which engendered them, *coexist side by side with elements of the new world, which overwhelm us with their barbaric freshness and the absolute independence of their unexpected appearance.* However, the new elements manage, on the strength of their vitality and purely organic legitimacy, gradually to entice more and more facets of the old world until, finally, nothing can stem the tide.[38]

Instead of an outright annihilation of historic architectural or regional styles, Soviet architectural theorists like Ginzburg recognized in 1924 that "[it] is precisely experience, consolidated in the creative efforts of centuries, that quite clearly shows the modern artist his path. . . ." [39] and that "neither a concern for continuity nor the destruction of the art of the past can help in any way."[40] This idea was shared by Lenin who thought, "Why turn away from real beauty, discard it for good and all as a starting point for further development, just because it is 'old'? Why worship the new as the god to be obeyed, just because it is 'the new'? This is nonsense, sheer nonsense."[41] It follows

[38] Moisej Ginzburg, *Style and Epoch: Problems of Modern Architecture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982. Original publication date 1924), 76. Emphasis is mine.

[39]Ginzburg, *Style and Epoch*, 38.

[40] Ginzburg, *Style and Epoch*, 48. Ginzburg goes into great detail of past architectural achievements of the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans and Early Modern.

[41] Zetkin, *Reminiscences of Lenin*, 12-13.

that a city planner should be both prospective and retrospective, so as to maintain history and tradition while at the same time looking towards the future.[42]

Moscow has been and still is a patchwork of architectural styles from Byzantine, Baroque, Rococo, Style Moderne, Modern, Stalinist and the more recent Oligarch bling. Alfred H. Barr remarked on the earlier elements of this motley grouping upon arriving in Moscow in 1927: "Moscow asserts its character immediately—-utterly lacking in any consistent style—a huge tasteless triumphal arch in front of the station. Behind the arch a monastery in very delicate Russian rococo of the eighteenth century. The snow covers much unpicturesque disorder."[43] His comment exposes the general expectations that observers have of European cities to be uniform and picturesque, like postcards and paintings within which the cities are frozen in time, immune from modernity.

The authors of the move from Petrograd to Moscow were faced with transforming the disparate "bourgeois" styles of architecture into an orchestra, not for the sake of some picturesque ideal, but rather to communicate the political and ideological transformation from a tsarist regime to a communist one. Aleksei Gan, the staunch Constructivist, recognized that formal qualities must reflect the evolving political ideologies stating, "if communism today demands a building *for today*, then it is essential to provide it, remembering that tomorrow it will again demand another form, and the next form must

[42] Françoise Choay, *The Modern City: Planning in the 19th Century* (New York: George Braziller, 1969), 17.

[43] Alfred H. Barr Jr, "Russian Diary 1927-28" *October*, vol. 7 (Winter, 1978): 11. Such is the nature of a diary not to have complete sentences. I have kept the text in their original form with articles or books written in English.

be provided in such a way that yesterday's not be swept aside, but be supplemented by, as well as supplement, subsequent demands."[44] Post Hegel and Marx, the architectural theorists were straddling the ideas of Hegel's historical inevitability and historical dialectic, with that of Marx's focus on "facts" and "naked structures."[45] But, is there such a thing as architectural inevitability, any more so than historical inevitability? Is it possible to speak of a teleological evolution towards reductivism, as Adolf Loos and Oswald Spengler and Clement Greenberg have done?

Loos, whose own architecture relied on clean and simple forms, suggested that architectural ornamentation was bourgeois and superfluous, noting that ornament took up fifty percent of all labor. The evolution of culture, not just for Loos but also for the influential cultural historian, Oswald Spengler, was synonymous with the wholesale renunciation of bourgeois influence, including the purging of ornament from architecture. St. Petersburg engineer V. Apyshkov expressed similar sentiments to Loos in 1905 by predicting the decline of aristocratic architecture and a rise of "rationality in architecture."[46] Tsarist influence and the architecture of wealth were easily identifiable throughout the two capitals of Russia. Ornate details and expensive building materials were not just markers of royal decadence, but after the economic collapse in the years

[44] Aleksei Gan, "Shto takoe Konstruktivizm?" *SA*, no. 3 (1928): 79.

[45] Senkevich, *Trends in Soviet Architectural Thought, 1917-32: The Growth and Decline of the Constructivist and Rationalist Movements*, 27.

[46] Starr, *Mel'nikov Solo Architect in Mass Society*, 23. Original source comes from V. Apyshkov, "Ratzional'noe v novoi arhitekture," (St. Petersburg, 1905).

after World War I, the 1917 Revolution, and the Civil War such architectural details were not economically feasible.

By 1905, the decline of the aristocracy was no mere prediction but fact as waves of workers' protests spread across the Russian empire. As early as 1848, Marx and Engels published their "Communist Manifesto" capitalist bourgeois culture was seen to be coming to an inevitable end. The proletariat would replace the bourgeoisie as the *sui generis* of cultural production and consumption. This meant a transformation from individual agendas to collective ones. No longer were commissions based on the taste of an individual, instead, the building commissions had to embody the taste of the collective.[47] Ginzburg confirmed this shift: "building socialism requires the architect to redirect his energy from satisfying individual taste toward the perfection of his standard, toward the clarification and maximal typification [standardization] of all details."[48] Benjamin Buchloh rightly recognized the importance of changing our preoccupation with an individual viewer towards a "simultaneous collective reception" for Soviet avant-garde art.[49] Rather than privilege auratic experiences, Soviet art shifted towards mass street festivals, utilitarian objects, and film.

From Berlin to Moscow artists and architects were thinking of the needs and taste of the working man. Their shared collective interest in cost-effective housing for workers

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[48] Moisej Ginzburg, *SA* no. 1 (1926): 2.

[49] Margolin, *The Struggle for Utopia: Rodchenko, Lissitzky, Moholy-Nagy 1917-1946*, 165, Benjamin Buchloh, "From Faktura to Factography," *October*, no. 30 (Fall 1984): 83-119.

renders the building sites from Berlin to Moscow as visually identical. If two things are identical are they then indiscernible? Traditional literature posits that Red Vienna, the Bauhaus and Soviet Modernism are utopian without recognizing that political geography does make a difference. I argue that it is necessary to treat the goals of the Bauhaus and the Soviet Modernists separately. It may be ironic to point out the importance that some "non-places," as one definition of Utopia implies, do, in fact, matter. Attempting to address the needs of the workers in a bourgeois state may be utopian, addressing the needs of the workers in a communist state is . . . well, . . . necessary. [50]

Indeed, what distinguishes "Soviet Modernists" from "European Modernists" is that Soviet artists and architects were not working with a capitalist, even a social democratic context, but with concrete, centralized attempt to reform all social relations and their manifestation in daily life. If we consider space in a city, say a park, the way that Kevin Lynch does, the park is merely a location that is different from the concrete space, or the space away from work, without explicit ideological implications. Lynch noted in *The Image of the City*—with ambitious universality—that the subjects of his study, regardless of the city, always noted with pleasure the vegetal and aquatic features of a city, regarding them as oases that they would make a detour to see.[51] Soviet theorists, however, saw space as fundamentally ideological, believing that the change in the

[50] Soviet theorists and architects were very clear about the shortcoming of capitalist economies in accommodating workers and their housing needs. These thoughts are pervasive in the various publications like *SA*, *Soviet Architecture*, and in Marx, and Engels.

[51] Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Cambridge: The Technology Press & Harvard University Press, 1960), 44.

political infrastructure would lead to a restructuring of the metropolis and its inhabitants' experience. For example, Soviet urbanists saw the distinction between Western, or royal examples of parks versus the potential for socialist ones. M. Shirov explained the difference in "Park, Kul'tura i Otdoh" (Park, Culture and Rest):

> If in the West, park culture historically represents a certain ideology of its time, the Soviet park of culture and rest, in general, plan of construction and needs of everyday life becomes a part of a wide system of social-cultural base. The park begins to serve the needs of everyday life of people and from something inert and unable to organize peoples' rest, it changes to a place of nature organized by science and technique. The Park, which now serves the needs of everyday life of people, should have the most convenient location for them.[52]

Shirov expounded on the historical nature of a park:

> The park, as a place of rest for large crowds of people was at all times also a mean for organizing the society. Parks of feudal society [as in old Egypt]: a temple, pharaoh's palace, grape vines, ponds, buildings for slaves, etc. The palace, the grape vines, the temple—are the means of organization and suppression of conquered nations, all routes and alleys lead to these centers; there are no squares for the free organization of masses of people. New times: Bois de Boulogne in Paris—a park for 200,000 people. It has no elements which help to unite masses or stimulate their collective creativity. Everywhere, there are deliberately laid

[52] M. Shirov, "Park, kul'tura i otdoh," in *SA* no. 5 (1929): 172. Also see, L.B. Luntz' "Perspektivye stroitel'stvo tzentral'novo parka kul'tury i otdoha" in *Sovetskaia Arhitektura*, no. 1 (1932): 35.

> narrow pathways, the squares for horse races and other entertainments to please only a certain class of society.[53]

In the same year, 1929, of *SA*, I.F. Milinis stressed the importance of park as an integral part of workers' clubs and their necessity for good rest.[54]

Parks in post-revolutionary Russia were often created from the properties of the well-to-do and the aristocracy. Leisure was the privilege of the elite, not the worker. To take over the pastoral setting of an aristocrat's estate, as had been done in the area of Devich'e Pole, and turn it into a public park does indeed speak to an ideological refashioning of Moscow, one that was different from other Western urban centers undergoing transformations. Moreover, according to the architectural groups outlined in *Sovetskaia Arhitektura* (1932), a Soviet park would play a central role in transforming consciousness.[55]

Therefore, building in the Soviet state had to be different than building in even a Social Democratic State.[56] The Soviet centralized, controlled economy could address the

[53] M. Shirov, "Park, Kul'tura i Otdoh," 172.

[54] I.F. Milinis, "Problema rabochevo klyba" in *SA* no. 3 (1929):112.

[55] Various authors, *Sovetskaia Arhitektura* no.1 (1932): 35-52. Many of the recommendations or plans included a children's area, a swimming pool, sports area, a stadium and exhibition areas. Also see Manfredo Tafuri's discussion of the potential of parks to create an "Enlightenment Dialectic" in his *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development*, trans. Barbara Luigia La Penta (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1976) 3-4. Tafuri makes a relevant point that was not mentioned in Soviet architectural publications. The "park" or green zone could certainly be understood as a contrast to an ordered cityscape, serving a dialectical function.

[56] It is tempting, but ultimately wrong from a Marxist standpoint, to look for similarities in cultural production between "Red Vienna," for example, and Soviet Russia. I underscore the point throughout the dissertation that historical and material specificity is essential to Marxism. "Red Vienna" historians

entire reconstruction of socialist living, instead of isolated pockets and commitments to social reconstruction. That is not to say that they were not guilty themselves of failing to implement Marxist ideologies here and there. Indeed, architectural groups always saw their commitment to socialist building as legitimate, while their competitors offered shallow renditions. Nikolai Miljutin exposed these tensions when he outlined three deviations from the true goals of Marxism and Leninism in city building:

> The first deviation is a course to unlimited growth of the city which is appropriate to its imperial status. People who support this idea see Moscow as a third Rome ruling over the world and create the projects for the Palace of Soviet with golden cupolas which make the Palace look like a temple. . . . The right opportunistic deviation is seen in projects which do not include real life necessities and collective organization of people's life. Opportunists work on small projects of reconstruction and do not see the whole picture of it. They think of reconstruction as partial improvements without actual socialist reconstruction of *byt* (life).[57]

Constructing Moscow

It is essential to recognize that Russia, and its lagging industrial development was a significant challenge for the Bolsheviks. Building Moscow into a socialist model

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likewise stress the unique character of Red Vienna, even within Austria. For reference see: Eve Blau's *The Architecture of Red Vienna 1919-1934,"* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1999), 7. Unlike their Soviet counterparts, the Social Democrats in Vienna chose labor-intensive method for building, as part of an employment strategy.

[57] Nikolai Miljutin, "Planirovki Moskvy" *Sovetskaia Arhitektura* no. 4 (1931): 2.

required overcoming the basic needs that were left in neglect; Soviet planners were faced with more than ideological and theoretical problems, after the two wars (WWI and the Civil War). Material shortages were so extreme that wooden homes and fences in Moscow were picked apart for the sole purpose of firewood.[58] Modern construction materials, used in the West, were simply out of economic reality or skill. Indeed, Konstantin Mel'nikov's watercolor (1920) for workers' dwelling appears like a typical and traditional dacha or a village house built out of wood (fig. 2). It would be a few years before Mel'nikov and other Modernists transitioned away from pre-revolutionary styles to those we recognize as "Modern." This is still evident in the Agricultural Exhibition in 1923, where exhibition halls were built out of wood and the layout of the exhibition was entrusted to the pre-revolutionary academician Ivan Zholtovskii. It was hardly the message of a progressive industry or building innovations, though some of the structures—such as Mel'nikov's *Maharovka* pavilion, resembling matchbooks wedged together—could be perceived as a cubo/futurist design (fig. 3).

A poignant reminder of the housing crisis and the lack of building materials is the fanciful and idealistic responses, including a demonstration of inflatable *izbushaks* (little huts, homes) on *Red Square* in 1924/ 1930s[59] and the flying cities of Georgii Krutikov

[58] "Ot Prechistenskih do Arbatskih vorot," *Moskva Kotoroi Net* Pytevoditel' ed. T.A. Fyrdyek (Moskva: Memories, 2010) 155. Some might remember the quote from *Doctor Zhivago*, "One man desperate for a bit of fuel is pathetic. Five million people desperate for fuel will destroy a city."

[59] Unfortunately I was unable to gather any information on the parade or pinpoint the date exactly. The photo was possibly taken by George Zelma, most likely in the 1920s as he was not in the Moscow in the 1930s. The banner read, "let us replace straw roofs for tile roofs." Photo is collection of Moscow House of Photography. One source states 1924 for the date while another internet source dates it to 1931.

(figs. 4, 5). These examples are imaginative but utterly impractical. No wonder that when funding and building was limited to critical, immediate projects, innovation was relegated to small-scale maquettes and paper. Architects often focused on "paper architecture," where they could envisage the whole socialist life on a theoretical level without waiting for funding. The lack of materials, skilled labor and technology could only be resolved with Western influence and economic stimulus. It is with some irony that Western architects and engineers were invited en masse to facilitate the building of socialism in the U.S.S.R..[60]

The reconstruction of Moscow was of great interest to the public. Numerous publications and newspapers, from standard newspapers like *Izvestiia* (News) and *Pravda* (Truth), to more specific publications like *Vechernaia Moskva* (Evening Moscow) and *Stroitel'stvo Moskvy* (Building Moscow) documented the changing face of Moscow. The publications mostly reported on logistics, such as new construction, either praising or condemning it. Though theoretical questions and discussions by cultural critics may be found in general newspapers, publications geared towards architects and artists like

[60] According to Milka Bliznakova, "The Realization of Utopia: Western Technology and Soviet Avant-Garde Architecture," in Brumfield's *Reshaping Russian Architecture*: *Western Technology Utopian Dreams*, " some 1,000 foreign architects were working in the U.S.S.R. during the 20s and 30s. This fact was never mentioned elsewhere, so it is difficult to verify the veracity of this very specific claim. It is well known that foreign influence was extensive. Ernst May said, "People who know Russia may be surprised that these plans (Russian city planning) involving billions have been entrusted to a German. American influence in the Soviet Republics is presently very extensive, and thus there were great expectations in the USA that Americans would be given the opportunity to tackle this problem too," *Bauwelt*, XXXVI, Berlin (1930): 1156, reprinted in Lissitzky's *Russia: An Architecture for World Revolution*, 174. Bruno Taut, and Hans Meyer also brought entourages with them. The engineer, Alex Khan had an office and a team working in Moscow. It is also well-known that the Soviets admired the efficiency of Taylorism.

Veshch (Thing), *SA* (Contemporary Architecture) and *Sovetskaia Arhitektura* (Soviet Architecture) focused more on the theoretical side of building in a socialist state.[61]

Trade publications were by no means promoting a single ideology when it came to building, far from it. Even after Stalin unified cultural production in 1932, debates continued and questions as to what socialist building looked like were still open for discussion in the 1930s as they were in the 1920s. For example, the theoretical antagonism between the city and the country, critical issue for the Bolsheviks, was still to be resolved in the 30s and continued to be examined in the architectural publications, along with questions of what constituted socialist style.

Pinpointing architectural features to avoid was more straightforward. After all, numerous critics including Engels and Loos outlined the formal features of degenerate styles, most notably eclecticism. The theorist V. Valihin, in "Problemye sintesizma v arhitekturye, skulpturye I zhivopisi v klassicheskom isskustve" (Problems of synthesism in architecture, sculpture and painting in classical art) condemned eclecticism:

> Eclecticism—as Engels noted—is a marker of feudal reaction to the fall of bourgeois culture. During this period of capitalist conditions, cultural

[61] Starr states that technical journals such as *Stroitel'stvo Moskvy* had several thousand subscribers. See Starr, *Mel'nikov Solo Architect in Mass Society*, 85. According to Bliznakova, out of 1,291 periodicals published in 1928, only a handful dealt with the arts, the rest were technical and scientific in nature. See: Bliznakova, "Realization of Utopia," 153. On the back of *Soveremmenaja Arhitektura* issues, the editors publicized means of getting subscriptions in France, Germany and Holland and were addressed in their respective languages. For the French public, the journal was titled as *Architecture Moderne*.

> conservatism gives rise to eclecticism. This stagnation shows a tendency to return to the `golden age.'[62]

Valihin invites the reader to consider capitalist examples of cities, such as Washington DC, and the impotence of such eclectic styles that define the city. Moreover, he predicts that under capitalism, "Art must die (through the formalist expression) or continue to apply eclecticism. The former and the latter we find in contemporary bourgeois architecture."[63] The Rationalists (ASNOVA) also leveled a critique against eclecticism which they believed to be entrenched in architectural schools where faculty study historical styles like a "method."[64] Oswald Spengler's influential *Decline of the West* furthered the distaste for Western bourgeois influence. Taking a cue from Spengler, Il'ia Golosov, the architect of *Zuev House of Culture,* criticized the West as constantly impeding Russian culture.[65]

In a gesture of rejection of Western bourgeois decadence and degeneracy, Mel'nikov' and Aleksander Rodchenko's designs of the Soviet Pavilion for the French Expo of the Arts Décoratif in 1925 were to be stark contrasts to the rumors of what the

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[62] V. Valihin, "Problemye sintesizma v arhitekturye, skulpturye i zhivopisi v klassicheskom isskustve" (Problems of Synthesism in Architecture, Sculpture, and Painting in Classical Art) in *Sovestkaja Arhitektura* (March 21) vol. 2 (1933), 4, heading 35.

[63] V. Valihin, "Problemye sintesizma v arhitekturye, skulpturye i zhivopisi v klassicheskom isskustve" 4, heading 35.

[64] V. Petrov, "ASNOVA za 8 let" in *Sovetskaia Arhitektura,* no. 1-2 (1931): no visible pages.

[65] Starr, *Mel'nikov Solo Architect in Mass Society,* 76. *Istorii sovetksoii arhitektury* (1917-1925), 27. Spengler's popularity is notable. Ginzburg was likewise initially "infatuated" with Spengler's idea. Starr, *Mel'nikov Solo Architect in a Mass Society,* 116.

French had intended for the Porte d'Honeur. The rumors implied that Favier and Ventre's entranceway was to be of grand opulence and extravagance. The Soviet Pavilion's humble worker aesthetic would thereby function as a dialectical antagonism to the "fur covered bed of the French gentleman's room."[66] In contrast to the French boudoir, Rodchenko focused on the workers' public space. It would be the space where they would sit together at a long desk made of wood, on wooden chairs and read journals together (fig. 6).

In the end, the limited funding dictating the Soviet Pavilion happened to align with the sober and efficient aesthetic ideology of the worker class. Indeed, it is very possible that the economy may have directed the aesthetic outcome. Put another way, was it the economic reality that dictated the simple, wooden architecture and furniture or was it "proletarian taste?" Since "proletarian taste" remained ambiguous and the availability of materials was not, we would have to conclude that it was material reality that shaped the aesthetic sensibilities shortly after the revolution. [67]

Clearly, efforts were made to define proletarian taste; an editorial in *Konstrukzye Moskvye* (1926) spells out the city council's recommendations for a design competition for worker's homes. Among the requirements, the designs should be aesthetically pleasing to a "healthy proletarian taste," instead of the "pitiless" buildings of the postwar

[66] Starr, *Mel'nikov Solo Architect in Mass Society*, 71.

[67] A well- known joke illustrates that it is in fact material reality or conditions that dictate aesthetic judgements and decisions. The gist of the joke: A foreigner is going to visit Russia and he tells his friend that if all is well, he'll write in a blue pen, but if things are not going well, he'll write in a red pen. His friend receives the letter and it reads, "Everything is wonderful here, the only thing missing are red pens."

economy that lack sculptural features. The architect must also consider: one, domestic material, two, thrifty construction and three, beneficial use of space. The challenge for architects was to locate "artistic simplicity of cheaper construction and standardization" while not neglecting the aesthetic features, including "windows and doors which are so important for the exterior of a building." [68] While there was a proclamation to respect the "healthy" taste of the workers, there were no real formal rules to follow, leaving architects to figure out what was healthy and proletarian.

The question as to what style typified the working man, or woman remained unresolved and still does. Cultural theorists of the time assigned preference for ornate details to the bourgeoisie. So what precisely did proletarian preference in architecture look like? It seems plausible that the opposite of the ornate, that is, plain and efficient, was conceived of as the default "taste" of the working classes, at least during 1920's.[69] By the late 1920s criticism of communal housing, particularly the austerity of the designs, grew increasingly fervent. The public disliked the "box-like" houses with their "unrelieved facelessness." The degree to which this was an issue is marked by the front-page article in *Izvestiia* in 1929 with the title "The Image of the Socialist City." Unlike trade journals, *Izvestiia*'s daily and broad circulation is noteworthy in signifying the public nature of the discussion. A large portion of the September 1929 issue is devoted

[68] *Konstruktzye Moskvye,* March, 1926, March. 1-2. The author laments the removal of sculptural decoration from buildings after the war, and offers the prudent recommendation of including doors and windows in new construction.

[69] This will be debated after 1932 when this question comes up and style shifts from Constructivist aesthetic to a Socialist Realist one.

to "The Face of the Socialist City." The author, Yakov Rykachev, complains that millions of rubles are spent on construction that is ugly and does not reflect the style of the Soviet epoch. He offers this evaluation:

> The modern architecture that now determines…the face of our `city of the future' stands aloof from our epoch and the revolution….One can spare oneself the trouble of reading a bad book or watching a bad film, but there is no avoiding living in a misshapen home, or getting away from the ugly urban landscape.

Instead he urges, "Dwelling houses, not barrack building."[70] Rykachev is quite critical of Moscow in general, noting that Moscow is no different from a provincial city; one needs only to walk away from the center and find the provinces. He advocates for a city built on a general plan, where "each building is in harmony with the whole ensemble with a specific relationship of lines according to the function of the buildings." He then offers a more poetic evaluation: "Strict dark gray facing of a building is in harmony with solemnic simplicity [which] creates a wonderful graphic design on a blue background of a sky. The buildings have no ornaments or any décor. They are ponderous, and their simplicity is characteristic of the highest levels of art." One may assume that he is celebrating Constructivism, particularly in so far as he disparages the "empire style" building being built on Arbat. Rykachev refers to the empire style as "petrified music" which sounds false and discordant with the music of the revolution. He bemoans the

[70]Jakov Rykachev, "The Face of the Socialist City," *Izvestiia*, 5 September, 1929.

"stone monsters [that] appear one after another and regularly on the streets," though he is also critical of "contemporary" architecture:

> Our contemporary houses built in the last decade say nothing to us as well as to our descendants. How little thinking and taste show these huge gray buildings pretending to have simplicity and monumentalism…stereotypes of a false Euro-American style which is blindly being copied by the provincial builders. This style has only one future—gray color of concrete cement.[71]

This unflattering view of modernist architecture was shared retrospectively by architect Raymond Curran, who argued, "Within the modern era, the development of an aesthetics of high technology, starting with the Bauhaus and the "International Style," although often associated with new functions like office buildings and factories, soon became a source of semantic confusion." In the end, "One could no longer determine whether a building was a hospital, an office building or a residential block."[72] Such are the shortcomings of form over function.

A 1928 issue of *Stroitel'stvo Moskvy* reported that "workers express their wishes to have facades decorated, or more beautiful."[73] Just the year before, the journal was praising Ginzburg's simple and restrained *Gosstrakh* (1926) apartment on Malaya

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[71] Rykachev, "The Face of the Socialist City," 5.

[72] Raymond J. Curran, *Architecture and the Urban Experience,* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1983), 66.

[73] *Stroitel'stvo Moskvey*, no. 11 (1928): 1. See issue: no. 9 (1927): 9 written by S.P. on Ginzburg's apartment for *Gosstrakh.* This is where Alfred H. Barr Jr. stayed during his visit to Moscow.

Bronnaya (fig. 7). Either the worker class was fickle, or more likely, there was a range of tastes among the working classes. Sergei Kirov, an influential Party leader, nevertheless, recommended in his speech that it was not enough for a building to be functional; it had to be expressive and inspire proletarians from afar, and must be based on simple, abbreviated forms without a dependence on any style of the past.[74]

Material Reality, Beyond Ideology

For Soviet city planners, the city of Moscow had to accommodate the image of a new socialist regime resulting from a revolution and to tackle the problem of housing. In 1918, a council for building and city planning was established. Professor and civil engineer G. D. Dubelir was assigned to head it. He had, after all, attempted to develop a plan for Moscow, prior to the revolution.[75] Dubelir published his critique of the city in September of the same year: "Before today, the creation of the city was a spontaneous phenomenon; each building, each house was the result of individual initiative, hence the haphazard result."[76]

[74] Starr, *Mel'nikov Solo Architect in Mass Society*, 74. Kirov's speech in "Iz istorii sovetskoi arhitektury 1917-25," 146. He is referring to the competition for the Palace of Labor.

[75] Starr, *Mel'nikov Solo Architect in Mass Society*, 41.

[76] Dubelir is quoted in Kopp, *Architecture et urbanism sovietiques des annees vingt: ville et révolution* , (Paris: Editions Anthropos, 1967), 45. Original citation comes from texts and documents assembled by K.N. Affanassiev and B.E. Hazanove in *Iz istorii sovetskoii arhitekturye 1917-1925.*Academy of Sciences. Dubelir is mostly right. However, one year after the great fire of 1812 where two-thirds of Moscow was destroyed, a Commission for Building Moscow was established to create a new plan for Moscow. Among the concerns of the commission was to control large buildings and the material resources they required. The goal was to rebuild the housing that was lost in the 1812 fire and to reign in the numerous private builders and their visions under a more cohesive city plan. The time-frame for the task was, ironically, five years.

The Soviet critic Pavel Novitsky also lamented in "Revolution and Culture" (1925) that building goes on haphazardly and without real planning:

> Meanwhile, life goes on as usual. Construction is increasing, and increasing anarchically, without any plan or guidance. Cities are changing their appearance and are growing haphazardly. . . .Questions of architecture are becoming the most pressing questions of our culture. It is time that our economic and ideological planning organizations began to get involved with them.[77]

Generally speaking, as the Moscow state archives indicate, the primary concerns prior to the revolution were to establish rightful ownership of a building or plot of land. After the revolution, with funding depending on the state resources, rules and regulations were enforced for building types. Dubelir observered, "Everything is mixed in the disorder, the factory next to living quarters, a hospital next to a stable, a school with the heart of a warehouse." He urged that the first task is to "find the solution to the housing problem. In each case, the solutions must come in unison with existing resources." [78] The second task was to organize disparate parts of the city in an orderly manner. The city is not only a place where one lives, but it is important for economic and intellectual life, in

[77] Pavel Novitsky, "Gegemonija arkitektury" in *Revolutsiia i kul'tura*, no. 7. (April 15, 1928): 49. Senkevich, *Trends in Soviet Architectural Thought, 1917-32: The Growth and Decline of the Constructivist and Rationalist Movements*, 47.

[78] Dubelir is quoted in Kopp, *Architecture et urbanism Sovietiques des annees vingt: ville et revolution*, 45.

addition to being the center of production.[79] It was Dubelir who suggested dividing Moscow into various zones that would be linked by a metro.[80]

Various proposals were offered on how to "fix" Moscow.[81] Existing prototypes ranging from U.S. metropolitan cities to English Garden city models and even utopian examples taken from sources like Thomaso Campanella's *The City of the Sun* (1602) Charles Fourier's (1772-1837) Phalanxes were all entertained. Disparity between the country and the city was a key issue and addressed in the number of disputes between the urbanists and the deurbanists. All received media attention, and their ideas were published not only in trades journals but also in daily newspapers. Still, questions remained as to what, precisely, is socialist living.[82]

Among the more resilient and popular conceptions for Moscow was to make it a Garden City, an idea that originated in England with Ebenezer Howard in the late 19th century. The Garden City would remain an important influence for theorists well into the 1935 General Plan of Moscow. Moscow was to appear like a series of landscape compositions with water and greenery uniting the architectural features.[83] Ikonnikov

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[79] Kopp, *Architecture et urbanism Sovietiques des annees vingt: ville et revolution,* 45-46.

[80] In Starr and Khazanova's *Sovetskaia arhitektura pervyh lyet oktiabrya,* 77-90.

[81] In contrast, there were plans to "fix" St. Petersburg, or Petrograd in 1906, so as to preserve the classical beauty against industrialization. See Starr, *Mel'nikov Solo Architect in Mass Society*, 41.

[82] *SA* no. 1-2. (1930). Editor's introduction questioned, "Where to go." And "What is Socialist Living/Housing?"

[83] *Konstantin Mel'nikov and the Construction of Moscow,* 272.

argues that the Garden City and its bucolic influence was a utopian gesture.[84] I would argue that this may be true if one treated the city and the country as polar opposites, with the country as the site of agricultural production and peasant class as opposed to the city as locus of bourgeois class and concentration of capital. But the Soviet theorists were interested in integrating the features of the country and the city and the very division that exists between the two.

The critical ideological distinction between the country and the city was outlined by Marx and Engels, who saw a disproportionate wage gap, quality of life and exploitation for those who lived in the country vis-à-vis those who lived in the city.[85] For them, "The antagonism between town and country can only exist within the framework of private property. It is the most crass expression of the subjection of the individual under the division of labour."[86] To rebuild the village meant the end of isolation and neglect. Lenin suggested "We must end the loneliness, demoralization, and remoteness of the village, as well as the unnatural concentration of vast masses of people in the cities."[87] Lenin recognized that the only way that this could happen was to invent a new urban and agricultural type. [88] In order to do away with the unequal proportion of capital between the city and the country, many theorists argued in favor of abandoning cities and

[84] Ikonnikov, *Russian Architecture of the Soviet Period*, 117.

[85] It will be evident in chapter five how this tension between country and city is treated in film.

[86] Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, 176.

[87] Lenin is quoted in Ernst May's, "Moscow: City Building in the U.S.S.R.," in Lissitzky's *Russia: An Architecture for World Revolution*, 190.

[88] "Perestroit Derevny (Rebuild the Village)" in *Soveremmenaya Arhkitektura*, No. 1-2, (1930): 4.

investing in the "suburbs"— not unlike what eventually happened to Detroit and other American cities years later. One should gut the city by improving the countryside and creating suburbs. Bruno Taut recommended "The Land as the Good Life" and the members of OSA (Association of Contemporary Architects) wanted to de-urbanize, proclaiming in *SA* in 1930, "We must end the big city, no matter the cost."[89]

The editor (most likely Ginzburg) of the 1930 issue of *SA*, argued that the failure between city and country resides in the failure to understand Marxist theories. The gist of his argument is as follows: "Knowing Marxism, we must not fail to unite villages and cities from living, we would not ignore transportation needs, distribution of factories and their proximity to home. Understanding Marxism would not permit us to jump over the real living conditions of man…theory teaches us to study concrete reality.[90]

It is worth considering the various proposals for city planning in so far as they demonstrate the diverse methods that went into consideration. *Stroitel'stvo Moskvy* and *SA* dedicated numerous publications to city planning. Participation and review of Ladovskii, Ginzburg, Barsch, Friedman and Mel'nikov's plan span the 1930 issues. Among the favored ideas in the trade publication was that of creating a Green City or Garden City and its various interpretations thereof.[91] In particular, OSA members aligned themselves with Mikhail Okhitovich's Green City plan. Okhitovich, the

[89] "Rasgruski goroda!(Dismantling the City)" in *Sovremmenaya Arhitektura*, No.1-2. (1930): 4.

[90] Editor, "Zamenit staroe zhileshe novim, (Replace Old Living with New)" *SA* no. 1-2, (1930): 5.

[91] See *Stroitel'stvo Moskvy's*, No. 1, No. 3, No. 6, No.7, No. 8, No 10, (1930). Ladovskii's plan was popular while Ginzburg, Friedman's and Mel'nikov's plans received negative critiques. See also *SA* (1930).

economist and philosopher, advocated for mobile settlements that would wean people of their attachment to things.[92] He envisioned housing to be akin to a hotel sojourn, calling no place "home". The dwelling areas were to be located outside of Moscow and people would gradually be moved out of the center into these residential zones. The old city would thus lose its meaning and become like a vast park with cultural monuments—a museum city.[93] In some respects, Okhitovich's plan appears similar to the Linear Plan favored by Miljutin, wherein the dwellings are separated from work by a green belt, factories and workplaces would run parallel to the housing belt, but be obscured by a green belt. Ultimately six parallel bands, divided into farmland, railway, residential, industrial, green zone, and park/recreational zones would define the city.

The de-urbanists wanted to eliminate the distinction between the city and the country by the extreme measure of making the city obsolete. If a person is sick, argued Ginzburg and Barsch, the person takes medicine, but it would be cheaper and better to prevent the illness. "When a city is bad—in other words, when the city is a city, with all its attributes: noise, dust, lack of light, air, sun, etc one turns to medicine—the resort—the garden city—that is medicine. In the existence of a city, [the resort] is essential." Rather than medicate, the way one does in a capitalist city with the resort, the prophylactic is to destroy the city and all its attributes. [94]

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[92] Ikonnikov, *Russian Architecture of the Soviet Period*, 107.

[93] Ikonnikov, *Russian Architecture of the Soviet Period*, 109.

[94] "No k konzy pytiletki ety zadachy predetca reshat vo chto bye to ni stalo. I vot edinstvenaya sredtstvo eeyo rishenye: dinamit, vzrivayoushii tzeloi kvartali (Towards the end of the Five Year Plan, we must

Among the recommendations the de-urbanists proposed was to prohibit new building in Moscow and to make any available plots as green zones. Despite appearing like a radical solution, the advocates of the Green City, Okhitovich, Ginzburg, Aleksander Pasternak and Barsch actually saw their solution as less drastic than systemic and expensive demolition of the city only to replace it with larger streets and newer buildings, as promoted by Kaganovich. The de-urbanist process would proceed at a slower pace. Bit by bit, Moscow would be "unloaded" or "disinfected." In its place, the prophylactic Garden City would be established 30 kilometers north of Moscow. The historic city would come to function like a cultural museum. Over time, the old buildings of Moscow would succumb to a healthy entropy, while more important, historical buildings and neighborhoods would be preserved. [95]

Moscow city's communal services department held a poll on the future of cities, and workers tended to favor the Green City, or generally living away from factories, provided there was transportation. According to one worker, "we need to have good rest after work, we need Green Cities." Another worker suggested keeping housing at least 10-20 km away from factories as "we are suffocating from gases and high percentage of tuberculosis."[96] What is remarkable is that Moscow's city council entertained the idea of

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resolve what should not be. And so the sole solution: dynamite, the destruction of the entire block)." From: M. Ginzburg and M. Bartsch. Zelyonij Gorod *SA*, no. 1-2 (1930): 17-18.

[95] *SA*, Barsch, Moisej Ginzburg, "Green City," 18. They list the historic zones that should be preserved, including the Kremlin, Arbat, Povarskoi, Krasnoi Presnya, Miassnitskaja, etc. It is important to consider the relevance of historic buildings and neighborhoods and why new construction by Ginzburg and Barsch acknowledged the historical context of the neighborhoods where their designs were inserted.

[96] *Konstruktzye Moskvye*, no. 6 (1930): 27-29.

Green City seriously enough to pay 600,000 rubles to prepare the grounds for its foundation.[97]

Other competing groups suggested their own conceptions of how to reconstruct Moscow. Members of the opposing architectural group ASNOVA, notably Ladovskii, advocated for linking the old city and the new city within a parabolic plan. He rightly saw that everything was concentrated within the inner ring and hence suffocated by it. In order to open up the space, he suggested breaking up the peripheral zones in the Northwestern region of Moscow, as a kind of flow valve. At nearly the same time, Leonid Sabsovich, an economist and statistician, promoted another solution for the socialist city, proposing multiple cities with fixed populations of 50,000. He believed that population distribution was paramount with the distinct feature: agricultural town and industrial towns all to be bound by a completely communal way of life. The population would live in fifteen to twenty multi-storied apartment blocks, all with communal crètches, dining halls, and recreational facilities. The ultimate goal was to be the emancipation from "the cult of things" and dissolution of the family.[98] Kopp has pointed out that such musings on communal life did not represent the majority of architectural thought of the period but became an easy target precisely because it was so radical.[99]

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[97] *Vechernaia Moskva* May 22, 1924..

[98] Ikonnikov, *Russian Architecture of the Soviet Period,* 106.

[99] Kopp, *Architecture et urbanism Sovietiques des annees vingt:ville et revolution,* 160.

Critical of Sabsovich's plan, members of OSA voiced their opposition and endorsements in their periodical *Sovremmenaia Arhitektura*. In the 1930 publication of *SA*, the editors recognized:

> We have now arrived at a moment of disenchantment with the so-called "commune" that deprives the worker of living space in favour of corridors and heated passages. The pseudo-commune that allows the worker to no more than sleep at home, the pseudo-commune that deprives him of both living space and personal convenience (the lines that form outside bathrooms and cloakrooms and in the canteen) is beginning to provoke mass unrest.[100]

Lazar Kaganovich, later called "Iron Lazar" for signing a large portion of execution orders, was handed the responsibility of transforming Moscow.[101] Addressing the June plenary session in 1931, Kaganovich also dismissed the radical communal forms advocated by Sabsovich. It is important to keep in mind that communal living was not being dismissed outright, and, in fact, Kaganovich spent a great deal of time discussing the need for communal infrastructure to support workers' lives. Communal life did not have to mean creating rooms where people only slept, as Sabsovich advocated; it could also be created by social infrastructure like worker clubs, and dining facilities. But more

[100] Kenneth Frampton's *Modern Architecture*, 176. This passage is reiterated, or originated from *SA*'s editor's in "Where to Go" introduction to the first issue out of the two from (1930): 4. These two issues focus on the theme: Discussion on Socialist Urbanization." It should be stressed that the architects were not operating on their own in the plans for the various communal homes. Worker activists and representatives of the co-operative housing provided input and the stringent ideological rules for living in such communes. See Ikonnikov, *Russian Architecture of the Soviet Period*, 122.

[101] Kaganovich's signature appears on 188 execution orders, second to Stalin's 357. See: evidence from Presidential Archives in http://stalin.memo.ru/images/intro1.htm (Russian).

importantly, once you remove the domestic labor that confines humans to their individual space, humans are *free* to have a social life. This is why Kaganovich still stressed the importance of liberating women from their domestic chores.

As of 1932, it was still unclear what direction ought to be taken for the reconstruction of Moscow, prompting a significant competition for the best plan for Moscow. What is striking is that not only Moscovite and Russian, but foreign architects were invited to participate. At that point, haphazard building and overcrowding were still significant problems, to the extent that Kaganovich even hinted at demolishing 40% of Moscow. Later, he recognized the impracticality of such a plan. To his credit or to his notoriety, his vision was not unlike that of Baron Haussmann's reconstruction of Paris. Like Haussmann, he wanted to accommodate wider streets and thoroughfares, and, more importantly, he wanted to completely transform and confront the old, historical aspects of Moscow.[102] OSA and Miljutin condemned such profligate goals in Moscow city planning. The latter wrote:

> The violations against dialectic committed by the people who work on the plan of [Moscow] reconstruction is that they ignore the economic and financial calculations. The admiration of grand perspectives of Moscow reconstruction gives birth to creations which have no connection with the economic base. Some

[102] "Mosca. Forma del piano imagine della città," 27 *Mosca dell' Utopia.*

> plans are created from all the hearts and souls but they are separated from the reality and general goals of socialist reconstruction.[103]

Miljutin is, no doubt, referencing the de-urbanists, though Kaganovich's initial desire to raze nearly half of the city was equally decadent.

History and personal correspondences have suggested that Kaganovich was critical of avant-garde architecture,[104] but his attitudes were no different from Western architects or even within the avant-garde itself, which criticized each other's work. Consider the Leftist French writers Paul Nizan and Jean-Richard Bloch who argued against the skeletal character of Constructivist buildings in favor of "right of the people to columns."[105] In the addresses that Kaganovich gave, he did not name particular architects or artists. His public comments were general; when he suggested beautifying Moscow with sculptures, he did not specify what type.[106] He was, however, critical of profligate spending in construction and the limitation of building materials. In fact, he encouraged

[103] Nikolai Miljutin,, "Zadachi Planerovki Moskvy" in *Sovetskaia Arhitektura,* 1. Miljutin, was one of the editors of *Sovetskaia Arhitektura.*

[104] See Hudson's *Blueprints in Blood* for a character description of Kaganovich. I have avoided making judgements about character as it is beyond my discipline. His actions were deplorable and they speak for themselves. However, to point out Kaganovich's shortcomings would not explain his distaste for Constructivism, for example.

[105] Richar Pare, *Building the Revolution Soviet Art and Architecture 1915-1935,* 120. See: Jean-Richard Bloc's "Discourse aux Écrivan sovietiques" Moscow, Paris 1947.

[106] Kaganovich, "Za sotzilesticheskuyou rekonstruktzeii Moskvye i goroda SSSR."(For Socialist Reconstruction of Moscow and Cities in the USSR) *Pererabotannaya stenogramma doklada na ejunskom plenume TSK VKP*. (Moskva: Ogiz: Moskovskii Rabochii, (1931).

experimenting with new materials in construction as well as continuing the use of steel and concrete, which he acknowledged are still in limited supply.[107]

All these vehement debates over what to do with Moscow were published in *Sovetskaia Arhitektura* (Soviet Architecture), *Sovremennay Arhitektura* (Contemporary Architecture), *Pravda* (Truth), *Izvestiia* (News). There is something to be said for the fact that these journals, which were aligned with particular groups and factions, published competitors' criticisms in their own trade magazine and then responded to them. This genuine form of debate reflects a dialectic "struggle." The debate over competing views not only marked the desire to win design competitions, but was just as much about the mode of coming to see reality according to dialectical materialism, the official doctrine of the Soviet Union. This was especially so after Stalin wrote *Dialectical and Historical Materialism* in 1938. Stalin was relying on Marx and Engels' understanding of these terms, so that the view he promoted was not necessarily new to cultural theorists. Consider OSA's view on the nature of the debates among architectural groups: "The sharpness of our current theoretical discussions is certainly unavoidable and inevitable as the basic principles of the materialist worldview and its applications to architecture are being tested and formed anew."[108]

[107] Kaganovich, (1931), 51.

[108] Richard Anderson, "The Future of History: The Cultural Politics of Soviet Architecture, 1928-41," (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2010), 55. Anderson quotes from Prezidium OSA., "Sozdadim federatsiiu revoliutsionnykh arhitektorov," 89.

Despite the fervent discussions, ideas about what Moscow should look like were not yet by 1934, nor were the critical housing issues. In address to factory workers on the plans for Moscow, Kaganovich stated the following:

> In Moscow there are 2.5 thousand streets and alleys, 51 thousand living houses, more than 31 thousand villages, 23 thousand single-story homes, 21 thousand two-story homes. I already have to, in not too short of way, say, that the proletariat has inherited a very confused system of labyrinths, dead ends, dead end streets, alleys built by bourgeois ownership of Moscow…our city is growing and if we do not address the city planning, life will be unbearable.[109]

The same issues are expressed in *Moscow: General Plan for the Reconstruction of the City*, printed in July, 1935. The document laments "the chaotic nature of Moscow that developed over many centuries with barbaric capitalism. As a result Moscow has narrow and crooked streets and blind alleys unevenly distributed. The center is full of run down houses huddled together and warehouses plague the city."[110] One could attribute such faults to many European cities that grew randomly over time. Moscow is a ring city that expanded concentrically from an old fortified city; and each time it grew outside its fortification, another fortification had to be implemented, so it radiated outward like a

[109] Kaganovich, (1934), 19.

[110] The translated version of *Moscow: General Plan for the Reconstruction of the City*, originally published by the Union of Soviet Architects in 1935 appears in Sir E.D. Simon's *Moscow in the Making* (London: Longmans, Green and Co. 1937), 184-185. Sir. E.D. Simon was the chairman of the Manchester housing committee, then Lord Mayor of Manchester and member of the economic advisory council in the early 20s.

spider's web. There are challenges for a city that is not formed on a grid, particularly with regard to automobile traffic—was not yet a problem in the twenties.[111]

By 1935, a Master Plan for Moscow was finally put forward. The radial, that which maintained the already existing ring feature of Moscow, won out against the more radical and expensive versions. The inner zone was viewed as "democratic centralism."[112] And if the inner ring could be conceived as "democratic," why not permit proletarian classicism?

Conscientious Objections: *Ostrannenia*-Dislocation

To conceptualize the city as a spectacle, whatever spectacle it may be, the way "the artist of demolition" Baron Haussmann had done for Paris, Moscow's city planners had to understand the purpose and ideology the city was to convey. For Haussmann and Napoleon III, Paris was redesigned to be a modern city, but one that also served the interests of the Second Empire. A city could thus work in the function of the ruling ideology, simply by the size of the streets and how they were laid out. This was not just a decision to support a grid plan that could easily be interpreted in the spirit of Enlightenment ideas, but a wholesale rearticulation of the city, including the elimination

[111] As late as 1978, the Soviet position on traffic was to improve public transit so that it remains the most common way of moving in cities. The authors of the report were cognizant of exhaust emissions and health risks to health and the environment, stating the desire to provide, "the least possible harmful impact by transportation on the urban environment." For more on this progressive attitude, see *Transportation and the Urban Environment: A Joint U.S.-U.S.S.R. Report on: The Rational Relationship Between Automobile and Public Transit Development*. (State Committee on Civil Engineering and Architecture of the U.S.S.R. (Gosstroy); Central Scientific Research and Design Institute on Urban Development (Gosgrazhdanstroy); U.S. Department of Transportation; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1978).

[112] Ikonnikov, *Russian Architecture of the Soviet Period*, 115.

of the seedy neighborhoods where crime and disease threatened the image of reform. For some, notably Walter Benjamin, a modern Paris also meant the loss of the itinerant individual and the rise of the crowd. But instead of an empowered crowd, it facilitated the ruling elite. Modern was thus not necessarily revolutionary.

What Paris got right, the building of hospitals, schools, bringing light and parks that unified the social space, it also missed the promise of becoming the social "utopia" it had the potential to be. The changes were cosmetic; former class antagonisms remained intact. Urban projects of renewal that continue to maintain social inequality were precisely utopian—a vision of social cohesion that never could be. Working class neighborhoods were actually broken up.[113] That while "ideal" city planning in Paris, Berlin or Chicago may have looked similar to city planning in the U.S.S.R., it is absolutely essential to recognize that the Marxist/Leninist revolution and establishment of a workers' state had an essentially different consumer. If state apparatuses and ideology affect the construction of social reality, then surely urban planning would be implemented and experienced differently in a very different socio-political context.

The Soviet ideologues were burdened early on with the fact that social consciousness, especially the working class, was hardly conscious. In order for the revolution to be sustained in a meaningful way, the masses had to not only become

[113]See Walter Benjamin's *The Arcades Project*, "Expose of 1935" section on Haussmann, or Barricades. 11-12Convolutes C "Ancient Paris, Catacombs, Demolitions, Decline of Paris" and E "Haussmannization, Barricade Fighting" and P "The Streets of Paris," trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999). Also, Susan Buck-Morss, *Dialects of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1993), 89.

conscious of their social conditions, they had to remain conscious. Lenin saw education critical to this and urged the Young Communist Leagues to "learn."[114] The Soviet formalist writer and theorist Viktor Shklovsky, who developed the term *ostrannenia*, advocated for art to produce a feeling of defamiliarization in order to lead the reader to a state of conscious awareness. He writes in his 1916 essay, "Art as Technique":

> Habitualization devours work, clothes, furniture, one's wife, and the fear of war. `If the whole complex lives of many people go on unconsciously, then such lives are as if they had never been.' And art exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone stony.[115]

How one feels the stoniness of stone, depends very much on the circumstantial.[116] In a text, words one may expect may be eliminated, and thus calling greater attention to them. One could also change a point of view in a narrative, as Leo Tolstoy had done when a horse becomes the narrator, instead of a human. Shklovsky calls these techniques as

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[114] Vladimir I. Lenin, "The Tasks of the Youth Leagues," (Speech given at the Third All-Russia Congress of the Russian Young Communist League, October 2, 1920) in *On Utopian and Scientific Socialism* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965) 189-205.

[115]Viktor Shklovsky, "Art as Technique," page two of: https://paradise.caltech.edu/ist4/lectures/**Viktor**_Sklovski_**Art_as_Technique**.pdf. Shklovsky and other formalists came under scrutiny for being Neo-Kantian, privileging aesthetic experience as something transcendental. For a diatribe against Kant, see Lunachrsky's *Etudye kriticheskiye e polymicheskye*, (Moskva: Pravda, 1905). Much of Lunachrsky's work on aesthetics rejects the "idealism" of Immanuel Kant's philosophy.

perceptions of disharmony in a harmonious context.[117] Such devices force the reader to reorient, and to slow the cognitive process.

A stark example of *ostrannenia* may be found just a few blocks from the Fruzenskaya metro station and the *Kauchuk Club*.[118] Along the Kholzynova Pereulok and Ulitsa Rossolimo, stands the Moscow State Pedagogical University (with previous names that included Moscow State V.I. Lenin Pedagogical Institute), founded in 1872. It faces the corner with a grand neo-classical display of columns and polychroming. Right across the street, on the opposite corner is # 17/18, a Constructivist inspired "administrative building" (fig. 8).[119] The architect is unknown and since multiple architects worked in the Constructivist idiom, attribution is not that simple. The "administrative building" built in 1931 was originally intended for women's general education. [120] While it is devoid of any decoration, it echoes the curvature of the university, but its gray simplicity appears to denounce the architecture of the Pedagogical University like a harsh slap (fig. 9). One could, perhaps, assume that the architect of the modernist building was completely insensitive to the environment and was merely

[117] Shklovsky sees Tolstoy utilizing defamiliarization in his writing. See: "Art as Technique," https://paradise.caltech.edu/ist4/lectures/**Viktor**_Sklovski_**Art_as_Technique**.pdf.

[118] The metro line was yet to be built and therefore would not have existed at the time of construction. I use current markers such as metro stops as a means of orienting the contemporary reader.

[119] The street was once named after Count Trubeytskii and changed in 1939 to honor the Soviet pilot Kholzynov.

[120] Included in the vast inventory in *Spravochnik puteviditel' arhitektura avan garda Moskva 1920-X-nachala 1930-X-godo* eds, Nikolai Vasileiv, Marianna Evstratova, Elena Ovsynnikova and Oleg Panin. (Moskva, 2011), 190. The building in question is never mentioned elsewhere apart from anecdotal accounts in blogs. It had apparently housed generals, and in order to protect them remained "invisible" in historical or architecture accounts.

following the trendy Constructivist style. However, judging by the mirrored curvature of the Constructivist building to that of the university, it is inconceivable that the architect was ignorant of the surrounding architecture, particularly its ornate neighbor.

In a city, perception of disharmony may be achieved in a number of ways. Similar to a text, "the city" writes Aleksander Pasternak in the first issue of *Sovremmenaya Arhitektura* (1926) "is the maximal understanding of spatial forms, where all is being submitted and stay submitted, where not the aggregate, but an organism; structures, that come to life when given their purpose and placement." Further, "The whole comes to be understood as a panorama. Details give a house particular features, which then come together, [to form] the elements [into a] whole." And so he recommends:

> Architects have to be conscious of and find solutions on how to marry tall and short buildings. This way the city begins to beautify, like an organic growing combination of unique types, built forms reflective of a once homogeneous background. This percentage, relation-wise, of the low-rise background, with separate rhythmic hits of high rises, and in contrast, general high underlined pauses. We do not try to paint a picture of an "ideal" city of abstract theories.[121]

Pasternak's conception of the metropolis implies that a city ought to be a synthesis of multiple, even contrasting forms, working in relation to one another.

[121] Aleksander Pasternak, "Urbanizm" in *SA* 1 (1926): 6-7.

It was easier for city planners to provide a full ideological program in the outskirts of Moscow, where pre-existing architecture was not an inconvenience. Rows of workers' housing, workers' clubs and stadiums could be built within proximity and ideological regularity. Such examples exist in the *Shabolovka* station area or worker cities like Magnitagorsk (fig. 10). More difficult, however, was to reinvent the established urban landscape of the Moscow ring. It was neither efficient nor pragmatic to demolish every building, although various key religious and monarchist buildings were leveled. And while there was no available budget for building workers' houses right after the revolution, repurposing tsarist buildings and requisitioning bourgeois homes for proletarian housing was feasible.[122] Furthermore, streets were renamed, magnifying the sense of dislocation and disorientation of the city dweller.

It is valuable to consider the psychological displacement, both in positive and negative terms that Moscow dwellers experienced. What is remarkable is that this was precisely the goal of the Bolsheviks. According to Lunacharskii, Lenin had expressed the need to "promote art as a means of agitation" by inscribing slogans on buildings and fences.[123] Agit artists, known for creating agitational art, mounted a series of architectural interventions in Petersburg and Moscow in order to create a feeling of dislocation, or an

[122] In August, 1918 a decree was issued abolishing private property. Though this appears very drastic, this gesture was not as wholesale as it appears. There were size stipulations that allowed some families to keep their property—see Starr footnote in *Mel'nikov Solo Architect in Mass Society*, 119.

[123] Anatolii Lunacharskii's "Lenin and the Arts" is printed in Vladimir I. Lenin's *On Culture and Cultural Revolution* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970), 243.

ostrannenia within the viewer.[124] Natal Altman, the theater artist, remembers his street creations, "I did not seek harmony with the old, but contrast with it. I placed my constructions not on the buildings but between them, where the streets opened the square." [125]

Initially, the artistic gestures or architectural interventions were small due to material shortages and they usually involved placing large words on buildings. Rodchenko's design on the *Mosselprom* building is a good example (fig. 11). The building was rendered into a large billboard advertising goods offered by *Mosselprom*—yeast, papirosi (cigarettes), beer, cookies, candy and chocolate.[126] At times, cloth or plywood shapes would be used on or in between buildings, not unlike Lissitzky's *Prouns* (fig. 12). These small squares and rectangles were inserted into buildings and squares, like small billboards. Malevich provides a compelling visual with his photomontage *Suprematist Skyscraper* from 1925 (fig. 13). Insinuated into the city like punctuation, these elements would have, at least puzzled the street goer, arresting her/his attention,

[124] For the origins of Agit-Prop Art, see Szymon Bojko's "Agit-Prop Art: The Streets were their Theater," eds. Stephen Bann and John Bowlt, *Russian Formalism: A Collection of Articles and Texts in Translation* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1973), 72-77.

[125] Altman is quoted in Lissitzky, *Russia: An Architecture for World Revolution,* 50. It reminds me of Benjamin's quote, "Architecture has always represented the prototype of a work of art the reception of which is consummated by a collectivity in a state of distraction," from "Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illuminations,* ed. Hannah Arendt. Trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 239. -

[126] *Mosse'lprom* is shown frequently in documentary films. Rodchenko and Vladimir Mayakovskii (poet) were responsible for Mossel'prom's advertising. See Christina Kiaer, *Imagine no Possessions: The Socialist Objects of Russian Constructivism* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2005), 143.

even if for just a moment. Such alterations, even small ones, meant to alter the experience of the city dweller, and to suggest that Moscow was no longer the city they once knew.

The urban changes appeared noteworthy, enough so for Lissitzky to remark on the transformation in 1929: "On weekdays their streets [Moscow, Samarkand, Novosibirsk, etc.,] and squares have had to adjust to an entirely new traffic rhythm and have also had to create new possibilities in terms of their function and use during holidays." Furthermore, he recognized that, "the introduction of new building types into the old fabric of the city affects the whole by transforming it."[127] Ikonnikov explains how this would function: "Decoration ensembles transcended the confines of people's everyday concerns, creating a special, festive world. These perceptions brought to people's minds a fresh perception of an urban environment as yet unaffected by lasting changes."[128]

Gradually, more substantial constructions were erected. Among them were the popular experiments with kiosks. For example, Gustav Klutsis' agitational cinema/ photo stands that would show photographs, slogans with an audio component were planned for the streets of Moscow. A photograph of A. Levinsky's *Kiosk for the State Publishing House* (1924) is one of the few surviving photographs of an actual kiosk and provides an idea of how they would have functioned (fig. 14).[129] Small-scale experiments should not be ignored; the budget for extraneous construction was virtually non-existent and was

[127] Lissitzky, *Russia: An Architecture for World Revolution,* 52.

[128] Ikonnikov, *Russian Architecture of the Soviet Period,* 95.

[129] Christina Lodder, *Russian Constructivism,* 163.

meant more for publicity than to address day-to-day needs. The vast majority of the construction budget was dedicated to building housing and factories.[130]

Similar to billboards or cutouts inserted into the cityscape after the revolution, larger architectural projects functioned like Agit props, providing the feeling of *ostrannenia* or sharp contrast to the city scape. Throughout the city, where modernist buildings sit among historic sites, such contrasts are abrupt and create a more jarring experience than the mere blocks and patterns that were used shortly after the revolution. Shklovsky advocated early on for the need of such "irritants," having said:

> The technique of art is to make objects `unfamiliar,' to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object: the object is not important.[131]

Shkolvksy assumed what materialists, like Marx, believed: mindfulness is rare. Perhaps, art or architecture could force one to pause, and to reflect.

Even today, one cannot help but be struck by Il'ia Golosov's *Zuyev* worker's club (1927-1929) on Ulitsa Lestnaya (fig. 15). It dominates the space, imposing itself on the viewer through its scale and geometry. It must have been more remarkable when the adjoining buildings were small in scale. An early photo shows the club looming in the

[130] According to Moscow Main Archive: Utilities and Planning Department, for the period studied, the majority of construction projects were apartments, schools, crèches, and dining halls.

[131] Shklovsky, "Art as Technique," 2.

corner, dwarfing the adjoining buildings. *Zuyev* was built for the workers of communal utilities, including transportation. It was named after Sergei Zuyev, a worker and revolutionary who worked at a tram depot and was killed in the 1905 revolution. Golosov was "old school." He was inspired by French classicism and had traditional classical training under Shchusev.[132] Golosov, lectured at the Institute of Civil Engineers and at VKhUTEMAS. Interested in the impact of perception, he believed that cubes, cylinders and pyramids "have a life of their own."[133] This view that objects or colors have inherent meaning recalls the views of Kandinsky and Malevich.[134]

Instead of abandoning classicism, as many had done, Golosov reinvented classical form and fashioned the club in the manner of a factory machine; a monolithic structure, with a large cylinder bracing the corner as though embedded into the ground. The proportions adhere to the golden ratio and suggest a classical balance between verticals and horizontals; implied by the concrete horizontal belt that harnesses the cylinder, as though stabilizing the dynamic rotation. It is a strange building that attempts to work with elements of stability while referencing machines and their inherent movement, as if to play with the idea of classicism at work, or that classicism works.

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[132] It appears to echo Walter Gropius' *Administrative Building Sketch* exhibited in the "Werkbund Exhibition" that took place in Cologne in 1914.

[133] Ikonnikov, *Russian Architecture of the Soviet Period*, 82.

[134] On the influence of color on humans, see D. R. Pomortzeff, "K voprossy o vliyanie tzveta na cheloveka," *Sovremennaya Arhitektura* 2 (1929), 86-88. For an in-depth discussion on the continued interest in the meaning of form and color see: Alla Vronskaya "The Productive Unconscious: Architecture, Experimental Psychology and the Techniques of Subjectivity in Soviet Russia, 1919-1935" (PhD diss., MIT, 2014).

Golosov's club serves a convenient testament to the goals of revolutionaries. Leon Trotsky remarked in his *Literature and Revolution*, "If Futurism was attracted towards the chaotic dynamism of the revolution…then Neo-Classicism expressed the need of peace, of stable forms."[135] Indeed, the club bridges two antagonistic, dialectical concepts: the future and the past.[136] Trotsky's remark and Golosov's worker's club make it clear that socialist planners were aware of the potential of architectural styles to communicate to the viewer by presenting an antagonism of forms—movement and stability, ornate versus barren, tall versus short, etc.

Lynch notes, "More often, local points were remembered as clusters, in which they reinforced each other by repetition, and were recognizable partly by context….Such pairs may reinforce one another, resonate so that they enhance each other's power; or they may conflict and destroy themselves." He goes on to say, "A great landmark may dwarf and throw out of scale a small region at its base. Properly located, another landmark may fix and strengthen a core."[137] Lynch is right in recognizing the relationship that exists between sites, though, I disagree that contrasting features necessarily "destroy" each other. Landmarks may, actually, be more significant and recognizable if they are contrasted with their environment.

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[135] Leon Trotsky, *Literature and Revolution,* trans. Rose Strunsky (New York, 1925), 113.

[136] Shchusev Museum photo identifies the club for communal utilities workers, while Ikonnikov identifies as a club for workers of a tram depot. Ikonnikov, *Russian Architecture of the Soviet Period* 154. Photo from Museum of Architecture Moscow after the name of Shchusev, collection IX, negative 802.

[137] Lynch, *The Image of the City*, 83-84.

Just across the Divich'e Pole on Pljushika Ul. stands yet another workers' club—*Kauchuk Worker's Club* built, by Mel'nikov for the workers of the Kauchuk rubber factory (fig. 16). It faces the park of the Divich'e Pole (Virgin Field), anchoring the corner with its mass. Depending on how one looks at it, it flagrantly disregards or contrasts the Byzantine-style church dedicated to Archangel Michael completed in 1897 to serve the hospitals on the Virgin Field. One rarely sees the two side by side—the ornate, Byzantine-influenced church and the unadorned club separated by a mere street (fig. 17).[138]

One cannot help but see the architectural interventions, which were mounted by Agit artists in Petersburg and Moscow intending to create a dislocation, or an *ostrannenia*, functioning like film montage.[139] Lissitzky, who had trained as an engineer, operated on the same principle when he conceived his *Sky Hooks* (1924) (fig. 18). The "skyscrapers" are intentionally at odds with the surrounding eighteenth and nineteenth-century buildings.

Like Altman and Lissitzky, architects and artists sought to fragment the space rather than provide harmony. Various architectural sketches show a rejection of symmetry, use of diagonals and other acute angles, sheared surfaces, and contrasting

[138] Mel'nikov received very little resistance from the city engineer and the approval process was swift, in contrast to Velikovskii's *Gostorg*. Main Moscow Archive documents.

[139] Benjamin, "Architecture has always represented the prototype of a work of art the reception of which is consummated by a collectivity in a state of distraction" from "Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" 239.

light.[140] Take for example the planned elaborate open-air constructions designed by Aleksander Vesnin and his artist wife, Lyubov Popova; they intended to honor Third Congress of the Comintern. They conceived of two staged cities—The Citadel of Capitalism—made of "blind" Cubist solids and "The City of The Future," a reference to Moscow no doubt, which was made up of wheels, transmission belts, pylons, and cantilevers (fig. 19). To underscore "The City of The Future," the capitalist citadel had to exist as a foil. Tension was made obvious by contrast. Rowe and Koetter propose for the contemporary architect, "Iconoclasm is and should be an obligation. It is the obligation to expurgate myth and to break down intolerable conglomerates of meaning."[141]

Ivan Leonidov's 1933 competition design and rationale for *Dom Narkomtizhaprom* (Ministry of Heavy Industry) anticipates Rowe and Koetter's recommendations (fig. 20). "Until now," Leonidov states, "The *Kremlin* and *St. Basil's Cathedral* has been the architectural center of Moscow. Obviously, the erection of an enormous new complex on the *Red Square* will affect the status of the individual monuments which constitute the center," adding:

> The architecture of the Red Square and the Kremlin is like a subtle and majestic work of music. To introduce new instruments of colossal order of scale and volume into this symphony is only permissible if this instrument will dominate and surpass, in architectural quality, all other objects of this composition. Not

[140] Magomedov, *Pioneers of Soviet Architecture*, 76.

[141] Rowe and Koetter, *Collage City*, 120.

> pomposity, not inflated falsehood of forms and details, but simplicity, severity, balanced dynamism and massiveness should determine the design for *Dom Norkomtiazhprom*.[142]

Analyzing Leonidov's collage, the two towers would dwarf the site of the *Kremlin* appearing as though a silo supports a skeletal high-rise. His collage suggests a dynamic relationship, wherein the dialectic would be far more powerful than an isolated high-rise in a cleared field.

As dialectical devices, these modernist sites altered perception and, more importantly, consciousness of the street viewer from a passive experience to a state of awareness or wakefulness. Party leader Sergei M. Kirov explained the necessity of such a gesture:

> Comrades! Maybe this [Palace of Labor Monument] will give the needed nudge to the European proletariat, for the most part *still slumbering*, still unconvinced of the triumph of the Revolution, still doubting in the correctness of the tactic of the Communist Party, so that at the sight of that magic palace of workers and peasants they will realize that we have arrived seriously and forever….[143]

In retrospect, the desire of the Party to awaken the slumbering masses in Moscow was probably unnecessary. What use is it to create a dislocation for a public that had just

[142] Kenneth Frampton and Silvia Kolbowski eds., *Ivan Leonidov*, (New York: Rizzoli, 1981), 86. The source of Leonidov's quote is not provided.

[143] Kirov's *Izbrannia stati i rechi 1912-1934*, (Moscow, 1957), 150. Quoted in Starr, *Mel'nikov Solo Architect in Mass Society*, 73. Emphasis is mine.

experienced a Russo-Japanese War, World War I, the October Revolution, and Civil War? The inhabitants were undoubtedly used to anxiety and dislocation. Their *byt*, or everyday life between 1914 and-1922 was defined by wartime hardships. And then Lenin died in 1924.

CHAPTER TWO

There Is No Place for Utopia

Modern creations constitute an archipelago that is more complicated and scattered than the Aegean Sea. To hell with despondent, pessimistic moods! The age has its own greatness. Modern houses, garden cities. Whatever one says, the type, the standard which tends towards perfection, arranges itself with multiplicity and originality.[144] Albert Guislain, 1932

Stephen Kotkin aptly recognizes in his article, "1991 and the Russian Revolution: Sources, Conceptual Categories, Analytical Frameworks," that academic regime changes are taking place in Soviet scholarship, with younger scholars contesting and revising the "Sovietology" of their predecessors. It is true, as he suggests, that younger scholars have not lived with the same biases of communism of the older generation and tend to reinvest in the commitments to communism while playing down Stalin's megalomania.[145] But it is possible to reevaluate history without rehabilitating its main players**.** Scholarship on

[144] *Back from Utopia,* 82. From Albert Guislain's 1932 book on Belgian Modernism, *Bruxelles-Atmosphère 10-32*.

[145] For reassessment of the attitude towards the Soviet period, see: Benjamin Buchloh, "From Faktura to Factography," *October* 30 (Fall 1984): 83-119. Abbot Gleason, "`Totalitarianism' in 1984," *Russian Review* 43, no. 2 (April 1984): 146. Stephen Kotkin, "1991 and the Russian Revolution: Sources, Conceptual Categories, Analytical Frameworks," *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 70, No. 2 (June 1998): 386. Even the seasoned Sheila Fiztpatrick sees herself as a participant in the revisionist enterprises. See her, "Revisionism in Soviet History" in *History and Theory*, Vol. 46, No. 4, (Dec., 2007), 77-91. Also see: Victor Margolin's *The Struggle for Utopia: Rodchenko, Lissitzky, Moholy-Nagy 1917-1946* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 164-165. Margolin notes that Soviet scholars who lacked distance to Stalinism were unable to be critical or objective. I would argue that Western scholars are likewise tainted by their own political paradigms. See also, Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen for a reevaluation of Totalitarianism in "Approaching Totalitarianism and Totalitarian Art" in *Totalitarian Art and Modernity*, Copenhagen: Aarhus University Press (2010), 109-129. Rasmussen takes his cue from Slavoj Žižek (http://www.lrb.co.uk/v27/n06/slavoj-zizek/the-two-totalitarianisms and also **http://www.believermag.com/issues/200407/?read=interview_zizek)** who argues against the common conflation of Stalinism with Fascism as an attempt to dismiss any leftist critique of liberal democracy. Indeed and likewise, I see a similar reading and conflation of socialist housing in Germany with those in the U.S.S.R. I contend that a difference does exist, even at the most basic level of differing material conditions.

Soviet architecture is also experiencing a reassessment of long- held assumptions tainted by the experiences of the Cold War and the lasting discrimination of archaic historiograhy.

While accounts of architectural and artistic practices are rich in their political discussion, they are inadequate in providing a lived experience of the politics and projects that were inspired by the quotidian reality that was taking place in Russia after the revolution. Scholars tend to discuss buildings or projects as if they are discrete models that existed solely in a studio (laboratory as the term some have used) or worse yet, solely in the minds of the politically oriented architects. In fact, the number of references to utopian dreaming in Soviet art and architecture is abundant as will be pointed out later in the chapter.

Studies that label architecture as utopian forget that architecture functions within cities, within the lived, concrete experiences of the city. Not only do buildings inform the city, but they are also informed by the city, vivified by the inhabitants who read the city daily. Political ideology remains abstract until it is experienced; likewise, the building projects conceived with political intentions are only meaningful when they are realized in the tangible living experience of the city dweller and therefore subjected to a constant flux of interpretation and meaning. It is worth noting that Stalin understood this, writing

in 1938, "The dialectical method therefore holds that no phenomenon in nature can be understood if taken by itself, isolated from surrounding phenomena. . . ."[146]

Modernist Antagonisms:

The challenge in writing about modernist practices that took place in Russia shortly after the revolution is that romantic and nostalgic sentiments are omnipresent. Book titles like *Graveyard of Utopia* (2011), *Struggle for Utopia* (1997) and *Lost Vanguard*, (2007) ironically paralleling titles on Modernism such as *Decline of Modernism* (1992), *Mourning Modernism* (2011) and *Whatever Happened to Modernism* (2010) remind us that hopeful enterprises like communism and modernism were ultimately failed ideals. Consider too, the 1992 large volume published by Guggenheim Museum on the Soviet Avant-garde art under the title: *The Great Utopia*. Its extensive inclusions of formal styles and media with names ranging from Malevich and Lissitzky to lesser known ones like Aleksander Deneika and Il'ia Golosov and the span of 17 years reduced the vast and varied artistic production and philosophies from 1915-1932 to …utopian.[147]

A romantic outlook is evident in the most respected of scholars. Frederick Starr, for example would rather see the influence of Ebenezer Howard's Garden City's bucolic ideals in Mel'nikov's design of wooden dwelling for workers, rather than locate his

[146] Joseph Stalin, *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*, 7.

[147] *The Great Utopia: The Russian and Soviet Avant-Garde* eds. Paul Wood Vasilii Rakitin, Jane A. Sharp, Aleksandra Shatskikh (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1992).

design in local and pragmatic models. A Garden City Society had already been established in Russia by 1904 after Howard's *Tomorrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* was translated in *Goroda Budeschevo* (Cities of the Future). [148] Scholars desire to see utopian precedents, rather than see what is most obvious— Mel'nikov's wooden house sketch looks like a typical village house. In light of material shortages, it is not "idealistic" but rather realistic. Indeed, the first housing built for the New Moscow in 1923, in the Sokol suburb, were built out of wood and looked like typical dachas (fig. 21). Walter Benjamin noted in his visit to Moscow, "The city is still interspersed with little wooden buildings in exactly the same Slavonic style as those found in everywhere in the surroundings of Berlin."[149]

Ignoring the pragmatic decisions made by architects in the 1920s and 1930s, Semyon Mikhailovskii makes the rather absurd claim in the exhibition catalogue "Russian Utopia: A Depository" (1996) for the Venice International Exhibition of Architecture, that Russians have a proclivity for Utopias. "Russians," according to Mikhailovskii, "never felt comfortable or confident in the real world. They were much more at home and free in a make-believe one, among pure ideas; their innate dreaminess was imparted with energy and dynamism only in a project." He adds, "It was not only the genetic proneness to reverie, but also a desire of the regime to carry a human being

[148] Milka Bliznakova, "The Realization of Utopia: Western Technology and Soviet Avant-Garde Architecture," *Reshaping Russian Architecture: Western Technology, Utopian Dreams,* 154.

[149] Benjamin, "Moscow," 125.

away into virtual reality that fostered this process." [150] In contrast to Mikhailovskii's claim, this chapter highlights the often pragmatic and critical debates that took place in post-revolutionary Russia, suggesting that Soviet architects were in fact deeply invested in the needs of the contemporary urban situation.

Françoise Choay's thorough study on historical Utopias draws seven distinctions of Utopia. The first three points address the particulars of Utopia texts and authors, but the last three are useful here. In point four she writes, "the model society is opposed to a historically real society, and the criticism of the latter is indissociably linked to the description of the former." In point five, she states: "the model society is supported by *a model space which is an integral, necessary part of it*." Meanwhile, in point six, Choay notes: "the model society is located outside of our system of spatio-temporal coordinates: it is *elsewhere*." Finally, in point seven, she argues, "the model society is not subject to the constraints of time and change."[151] If anything, as I make the point throughout the chapter, Moscow was and is a city continually in flux with tangible coordinates.

Moscow's geographical coordinates, 55.7500° N, 37.6167° E fix it into a specific and tangible space, and yet according to *Mosca: Capitale dell' Utopia*, it is a capital of

[150] "Russian Utopia: A depository" Venice Biennale. The project was carried out with technical and organizational support of National Center for Contemporary Arts, A.V. Shchusev State Museum of Architecture, Open Society Institute, 2R Studio (Moscow), Moneta SPA (Milan), Project Russia Magazine. Semyon Mikhailovsky, "The *`dolgiy yashchik'* of Russian architecture." Last page of catalogue (no page numbers) 1996.

[151] Françoise Choay, *The Rule and the Model: On the Theory of Architecture and Urbanism* ed. Denise Bratton (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997), 34. Of a similar nature, see her: *L'urbanisme, utopies et réalités* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1965).

Utopia.[152] The collection of essays in focuses on the imaginary and utopian nature of Moscow. In truth, every metropolis is a collection of aspirations and disappointments and thus is always destined to be utopian, while necessarily also being dystopian. But it critical to see that Russia, and Moscow, in particular, was very much a real site, unique in its approach to the challenges of addressing the daily life of its inhabitants.

Understood from its Greek root, Utopia means a good place and at the same time as a non-place. If we consider Thomas More's popular version of Utopia, Utopia was a good place where citizens were happy only because they themselves could only be *morally* good.[153] Or as the mystical and idealistic Ernst Bloch explained in his *The Principle of Hope* that utopian consciousness is a "Not-Yet-Become, Not-Yet Brought-Out and Not-Yet-Conscious."[154] Considered together, if Utopian consciousness means not to be fully aware, how could one possibly be moral? According to these terms, how could Utopia not be destined for failure? In fact, morality as previously conceived was up for debate and consciousness, rather than unconsciousness of the population, was precisely the goal of Marxist and Soviet theoreticians.

And still, the numerous titles with Utopia in the headline, published within the decade after what the Western media described as "the fall of communism," suggests a

[152] *Mosca: Capitale dell' utopia,* ed. Arnolodo Mondadori Art. (Milan: Italstat gruppo iri, 1991).

[153] Thomas Moore's *Utopia* is included in full in *The Utopia Reader* eds. Gregory Claeys and Lyman Tower Sargent (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 77-93. The editors note that shortly after Moore's publication, the term "Utopia" and "utopian" came with negative connotations.

[154] Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 13-16.

resignation that a communist society was never to be or may never have been. This state of mourning or regret implies a teleological belief that Soviet society and cultural output was headed in one particular direction and to not have arrived there by a certain period in time constitutes failure, and the submission that communism was, in the end, a utopian endeavor. But more importantly, how do we legitimately speak of utopian practices and tendencies, with architecture in particular? What exactly does that mean for artistic practices and how does one arrive at this designation when cultural production is not all formally alike?

Christopher Wilk's sweeping introduction to *Modernism: Designing New World* (2006) concludes that Modernism in and of itself cannot be understood without considering the idea of Utopia.[155] Wilk classifies two broad categories of Utopias—socialist Utopias and Utopias that were created in capitalist societies. Communist Utopias were based on the conclusion that the political and social conditions for socialism have been firmly established, without any previous constraints, so that now a more unified ideology binds cultural producers.[156] Wilk identifies culture under categories such as "Communist Utopia," "Political Utopias," "Rational Utopia" and even "Dionysian Utopia." When constructed so broadly, such utopian attitudes can be found in

[155] Christopher Wilk, "Introduction: What was Modernism?" in *Modernism 1914-1939 Designing a New World* (London: V&A Publications 2006), 19.

[156] Wilk, *Modernism 1914-1939 Designing a New World*, 34.

all modern works. Wilk's problematic use of Utopia also complicates his use of Modernism, a terrain defined so expansively that the reader has no sense of footing.[157]

Rather than isolate examples of utopian practices, Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter claim indiscriminately in *Collage City* (1978) that nearly all modern city planning is reduced to utopian reverie—either contemplative or activist forms. In addition, they see modern architecture as a messenger of good news.[158] If we conflate the two beliefs that frame modernist cultural production as "the bearer of good news" that is, at the same time, "utopian," we see that whatever good news Modernism was promising was always out of reach. This leaves a tight space to build cities that neither prognosticate for the future, planning for rapid transit for example, nor acknowledge the already stifling traffic problems. Rowe and Koetter desire to offer an alternative to such utopian city planning by encouraging a "bricolage"— a term they borrow from Henri Lévi-Strauss to denote chance and haphazard collisions between sites.[159] This recommendation is hardly necessary; regardless of whatever city planning may be imposed to unify a city,

[157] For a thoughtful critique of the study of Modernism, see Anthony Vidler's *Histories of the Immediate Present: Inventing Architectural Modernism* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2008).

[158] Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter, *Collage City* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1978), 11. Lévi-Strauss had recognized: "It is necessary to add that the balance between structure and event, necessity and contingency, the internal and external is a precarious one. It is constantly threated by forces which act in one direction or the other according to fluctuations in fashion, style or general social conditions." For the entire context, see *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962), 30.

[159] Lévi-Strauss suggested in the chapter, "The Science of the Concrete" from *The Savage Mind* that an artist is both a scientist and a *bricoleur* in that he/she both creates events and then rearranges them. The term, "bricolage" is also used by Manfredo Tafuri in his *Architecture and Utopia*, 9.

unpredictability and collision are unavoidable. Any "living" city is a site of ongoing construction and destruction.

Editor Hubert-Jan Henket writes the following foregone conclusion to the legacy of the 20th century in *Back from Utopia* (2002): "This brief overview shows that although the Modern Movement might have been the most powerful influence on the development of 20th-century architecture, nothing of the desired Utopia was realized." [160] Perhaps modernist architects never aspired to build utopian architecture; at least the Soviet architects did not. While Henket sees no evidence of Utopia, Vieri Quilici finds that it did exist but ended with the Soviet state. He writes in the preface to *Landmarks of Soviet Architecture 1917-1991* (1992): "The history of Soviet architecture is the story of a Utopia that has come to an end, just as the Soviet state has come to an end." [161] It begs the question, at what point does the timeline stop, and what particular goals were not realized? Judging by apartment complexes built in the 1970s in Europe and in Russia, modernist standardization was still in practice. Even Quilici, who pronounced the end of Utopia with the end of the Soviet state, understands the limitation on dating "Utopia" and by extension, the building of socialism. He acknowledges:

> How is it possible to present, in terms of a finished history, a challenge that, in order to be *utopian,* places itself outside the limits of time and therefore of history

[160] Hubert-Jan Henket, *Back from Utopia, Back from Utopia, The challenge of the Modern Movement*, eds. Hubert-Jan Henket and Hilde Heynen (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2002), 12.

[161] Vieri Quilici, "The End of a Utopia" in *Landmarks of Soviet Architecture 1917-1991* ed. Vieri Quilici. (New York: Rizzoli, 1992). Quicili appears to have recycled his sentiments from a publication that he contributed to in *Mosca dell' cita Utopia,* 6-7.

> itself? In order to attain this utopian quality (obviously a vague concept) one must go beyond the very concept of "confines," confines that are established in the very language of history. The solution of this paradox lies before us.[162]

Indeed, how useful is it to apply the term to lived reality?

Barbara Goodwin, explains in her classic *Politics of Utopia: A Study in Theory and Practice* (1982) the often contradictory assumptions about Utopia, stating, "As notions of utopian thinking fluctuate according to social and intellectual context, it is difficult to assign any one particular meaning to Utopia."[163] If it is the ideology that determines the label, utopian becomes either more exclusive or more inclusive than what has been represented in the past. Rowe and Koetter caution:

> Given the recognition that utopian models will flounder in the cultural relativism which, for better or worse, immerse us, it would seem only reasonable to approach such models with the greatest circumspection; given the inherent dangers and debilitations of any institutionalized status quo—and particularly a status quo ante…it would also seem that neither simple `give them what they want' nor unmodified townscape are equipped with sufficient conviction to provide more than partial answers; and, such being the case, it becomes necessary to conceive of a strategy which might, one hopes, and without disaster,

[162] Quilici, "The End of Utopia," 6-7.

[163]Barbara Goodwin, *Politics of Utopia,* 16.

accommodate the ideal and which might plausibly, and without devaluation, respond to what we believe the real to be.[164]

The sober idealism that Rowe and Koetter advocate resonates with a speech given by Kaganovich to the June 1931 plenary session. Judging by his statements, or propaganda, Kaganovich managed to sound optimistic while pointing out the urgent housing needs. He proposes to build five-story buildings in place of the single or two-story homes, but the reality is demanding as he concluded: "The process of demolition, including the demolition of existing homes, [that is], which already have space, [is foolhardy]. No matter how many new homes we build, we will not avert the housing crisis. . . .to replace all these single-two- storied homes with new ones, would have been Utopia."[165]

To describe historical situations or practices as utopian or label artists and architects situated in a specific historical condition as practitioners of utopian enterprises is problematic from a number of perspectives. To begin with, this label suggests that artists and architects were not grounded in reality or in their own historical context; even calling post-revolutionary Russia a "good" place belies the tough economic and living conditions. Secondly, and just as critically, it betrays a preconception that socialism or simply changing the status quo is either a dream or destiny for failure. As Barbara Goodwin points out, "Utopianism depicts an ideal form of social life which, by

[164] Rowe and Koetter, *Collage City*, 48.

[165] Kaganovich, (1931), 18. I have taken some liberties with the translation for the sake of comprehension. My additions are in brackets.

definition, does not currently exist." [166] One need only to consider the number of debates and pragmatic compromises that took place in post- revolutionary Russia as it worked to build socialism. Milka Bliznakova agrees, stating, "These were not utopias but buildable proposals whose structural feasibility had been calculated, sometimes by foreign engineers" and when the complexity of the building exceeded Soviet expertise, they were turned over to foreign firms.[167] Grigorii Barkhin, the architect for the headquarters of the newspaper *Izvestiia* wrote the following in his memoir: "However theoretical, or even at times abstract the problems with which I had to deal, I always believed that both one's analysis and one's conclusions must be closely intertwined with live practice, with the urgent concerns of the present moment. As I see it, this is entirely appropriate to architecture, which is simultaneously the most abstract and the most practical of all the arts." [168]

Surely, a study of Soviet history points to the ongoing negotiation with reality that Soviet theorists carried out. Lenin, after all, was forced to reform communism into State Capitalism in order to save or resuscitate the economy. To see communist Utopia as a fait accompli may be convenient, but it is not accurate. A true Marxist would argue that

[166] Goodwin, *Politics of Utopia,* 17.

[167] Milka Bliznakova, "The Realization of Utopia: Western Technology and Soviet Avant-Garde Architecture," *Reshaping Russian Architecture*: *Western Technology Utopian Dreams* ed. William C. Brumfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 160. Relying on foreign firms led to resentments from the Soviet architects and engineers, who felt that their foreign colleagues were, as Lissitzky claimed, "patronizing." Lissitzky, *Russia: An Architecture for World Revolution*, 159.

[168] Catherine Cook, *Russian Avant-Garde Theories of Art, Architecture and the City* (London: Academy Editions, 1995), 93, quote taken from A.G. Barkhina, *G. B. Barhkin* (Moscow 1981), 122.

communism is an ongoing struggle, as is capitalism. City planner and architect Ernst May underscored this reality in 1931, a year after moving his architectural team to the Soviet Union:

> The truth is that no economic and cultural reconstruction of all life in the U.S.S.R. has no parallel in the history of mankind. *It is equally true that this reconstruction is being accomplished by a sober evaluation of all the realities, and it should be obvious to any observer that in each successive stage, matters recognized as desirable and ideal are being consciously subordinated to matters that are feasible and possible within the limitations of the present*.[169]

May's "idealism" and his pro-communist position made him an easy target of Western criticism. The editor of *Der Abend*, Paul F. Schmidt, condemned May's city plans, and socialist city planning in general, stating, "`Like a steel straightjacket, the plans of these cities and dwellings force all their inhabitants into a soul-less sameness. These are cities for slaves of the state, forbidden to lead their own lives, and their existence has only one purpose: to work like coolies for the state and to bear children.'" [170] Schmidt's description exposes the misconceptions and biases towards socialist city planning and communism. Martin Wagner, Ernst May's colleague, revealed the political bias that existed, "When I read these lines, I could not help but think of how very comfortable our

[169] Ernst May, "Moscow: City Building in the U.S.S.R." in *Das Neue Russland*, VIII-IX, Berlin 1931, reprinted in Lissitzky's *Russia: An Architecture for World Revolution,* 190. May stayed in the Soviet Union for three years, from 1930 to 1933.

[170] Wagner quotes Paul F. Schmidt in "Berlin: Russia Builds Cities," reprinted in Lissitky's *Russia: An Architecture for World Revolution,* 210.

own Socialist must feel in the "steel straightjacket" of the Wilhelmian city with its slum apartments and rear-alley catacombs."[171]

If anything, Soviet intellectuals were attempting to confront the dreamworld of late capital and what it had done to the masses. They themselves were critical of any native brand of messianic pronouncements, asserting as Trotsky had done, that no new culture could be built simply on arrogant manifestos; instead, they must focus on developing "a stable, flexible, activist point of view, saturated with facts and with artistic feeling for the world."[172] Conveniently, Stalin upheld this rhetoric, writing:

> Hence, in order not to err in policy, in order not to find itself in the position of idle dreamers, the party of the proletariat must not base its activities on abstract `principles of human reason,' but on the concrete conditions of the material life of society, as the determining force of social development; not on good wishes of `great men,' but on the real needs of development of the material life of society.[173]

Russian Bolsheviks were particularly aware of and cautious about the perception that Russian communism was utopian, after all, H.G Wells indicted Lenin of being a Kremlin dreamer after their exchange in 1920, writing: "For Lenin, who like a good orthodox Marxist denounces all "Utopians," has succumbed at last to a Utopia, the Utopia

[171] Wagner, "Berlin: Russia Builds Cities" from *Tagebuch*, XXX, Berlin, July 25, 1931 in El Lissitzky, *Russia an Architecture for World Revolution*, 210.

[172] Leon D. Trotsky, *Literature and Revolution,* 174.

[173] Joseph Stalin, *Dialectical and Historical Materialism,* 21.

of the electricians."[174] Wells saw Lenin's desire to electrify Russia as an impossible feat. It is a wonder how such pragmatic urgency could qualify as dreamy.

Whatever the good connotations the term "utopia" may have meant early on for European intellectuals, Ernst Bloch, who had written the *Spirit of Utopia* in 1915, had to concede later on that the term has for a long time been the equivalent of building "castles in the clouds."[175] In the same interview with Bloch, Theodor Adorno declared that there could be no picture of Utopia cast in a positive manner.[176] Understandably, the Bolsheviks rejected the term as it suggested that their political enterprise was unrealizable and nothing more than wishful thinking. After all, "Utopias are an expression of aspirations that cannot be realized, of efforts that are not equal to the resistance they encounter" wrote Aleksander Bogdanov, the leader of the proletarian art movement Prolektkult and author of *Red Planet* (a story that takes place on Mars, which I would have to agree is a utopian place).[177] Lenin was, in fact, critical of Bogdanov and the

[174] H.G. Wells, Chapter VI "The Dreamer in the Kremlin" (1920) in *Russia in the Shadows* is reprinted in full here: http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks06/0602371h.html#chap06

[175] Ernst Bloch, *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature, Selected Essays* trans. Jack Zipes and Frank Mecklenburg (Cambridge: MIT press, 1993) 1-17.

[176] Adorno and Horst Krüger's interview with Bloch is included in Ernst Bloch, *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature, Selected Essays,* 1-17.

[177] Bogdanov was Lunacharskii's brother-in-law.

Proletkult seeing the group as overly focused on theorizing, rather than confronting the urgent realities.[178]

Lenin, as Wells noted, denounced Utopian Socialism early on, seeing it as obstructive to class struggle, and that which, "*corrupts* the democratic consciousness of the masses."[179] Lunacharskii recalled that Lenin did not deny "daydreams" to exist and did indulged questions about the future. But when asked about what life will be like in the future, Lenin would say: "`Well, you know, people will be very clever then and they'll solve all these problems splendidly, so let's you and I come back to problems that have no one except us to solve them."[180] This may explain why Lenin initially implemented a program of state capitalism, as he believed and wrote, "It would be extremely stupid and absurdly utopian to assume that the transition from capitalism to socialism is possible without coercion and without dictatorship."[181]

Years before, Marx and Engels were adamant in stating that their socialism was not utopian, though their writing is often included in Utopia compilations. Engels writes in "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific" that early socialists failed to see that changes had to originate in the economic conditions, rather than evolve "out of the brain." He states,

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[178] Senkevich, *Trends in Soviet Architectural Thought, 1917-32: The Growth and Decline of the Constructivist and Rationalist Movements*, 26.

[179] Vladimir I. Lenin, *On Utopian and Scientific Socialism: Articles and Speeches* trans. A. Koptseva (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965) 67.

[180] Lunacharskii's recollection in "Lenin and the Arts" from V. I. Lenin's *On Culture and Cultural Revolution*, 252-253.

[181] Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Soviet Experiment*, 65. Original source not specified.

"These new social systems were foredoomed as Utopian; the more completely they were worked out in detail, the more they could not avoid drifting off into pure phantasies." [182] Marx and Engels' dismissal of early socialists rested on their overall rejection of political models based on ideas or absolute truths over materialist based concerns and actions, i.e. their refutation of the Hegelian worldview. Indeed a teleological world view based on the Idea or Absolute Spirit was precisely what Marx denounced. Like Marx, Lenin viewed Communism as a process, and not as some kind of static or ahistorical ideal to be implemented. Rather it was always "the real *movement* that abolishes the current state of things" – it is the *ongoing* process of the collective transformation of the social relations of production.[183] If anything, as materialists, they were eminently practical.

This focus on reality rather than reverie was precisely the rhetoric of the day. Gan, for one, argued that, "constructivism replaced sentimental, utopian nonsense with a healthy class orientation of: Mass Action."[184] The intent of the artists and architects working in the 1920s was precisely to disrupt that dream by means of confrontational and jarring experiences. Boris Arvatov declared in "Agit Kino" (Agit Film): "Agitation—not

[182] Engels, "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific," in the *Marx-Engels Reader*, 687.

[183]Marx and Engels, "The German Ideology" *in The Marx-Engels Reader,* 162.

[184] Aleksei Gan, "Aleksei Gan, "Rezolutzya po dokladam ideologicheskoi sektzie OSA, prenyatiya na pervoi konferenzei obshestva sovremennih arhitekterov v Moskve 25 aprelya 1925 goda," *Sovremennaya Arkhitektura* 3 (1928): 79.

dreaminess; agitation—practical action. That is why agit film is not a ghostly illusion but an expression of real people and things."[185]

The viewer, the street dweller, and the film goer were to be roused and made aware of the material conditions of their lives, not lulled into a false reality.[186] The sci-fi film *Aelita: Queen of Mars* (1924) directed by Yakov Protozanov, underscores Marx's and Engel's point. The main character, Los, an engineer becomes consumed by a daydream about Mars and its haughty queen. In order to get to her, he begins making plans for a spaceship. Los and the viewer enter his fantastical daydream on Mars and the revolt against his object of desire. In the end, he and the viewer are relieved to find that it was all a dream. Los awakes from his daydream and embraces his wife, who tells him, "Enough with the daydreaming, we all have real work to do," as he throws his spaceship plans into the fire. The message becomes clear. It is time to build socialism *in* Moscow.

If the *real* was obscured, and need only to be discovered in the here and now, as Marx and Engel believed, did those conditions to locate the real actually exist, or was the search in and of itself vain and therefore utopian? Frederic Jameson suggests,

> This brings us to what is perhaps the fundamental Utopian dispute about subjectivity, namely whether the utopia in question proposes the kind of radical

[185] Boris Arvatov, "Agit Kino" (Agit Film), *Kino Fot* no. 2 (1922): 2.

[186] Early Soviet cinema wanted to be an alternative to American films that offered a dream-like escapism from life. However, the majority of films that were available to Russian audiences were American films. But the desire was there, nonetheless, to offer the Soviet population films that broke the dreamscape. This topic will be discussed in greater depth in the final chapter.

> transformation of subjectivity presupposed by most revolutions, a mutation in human nature and the emergence of whole new beings; or whether the impulse to utopia is not already grounded in human nature, its persistence readily explained by deeper needs and desires which the present has merely repressed and distorted.[187]

Jameson may be correct, and we will, likely, never know for sure. Regardless, Engels and Marx understood, however, that material conditions and the social relations continued to change. There are no fixed material conditions and as such, social relations as far as they are determined by those material conditions, will always be contingent. In the preface of the "German Edition" to the "Communist Manifesto" written in 1872, Marx and Engels state, "The practical application of the principles (specified in the "1848 Manifesto") will depend, as the Manifesto itself states, everywhere and at all times, on the historical conditions for the time being existing."[188] Furthermore in *German Ideology*, Marx and Engels counter Hegel's teleological resolve, arguing instead, "History does not end by being resolved into "self-consciousness" as "spirit of the spirit," but that in it at each stage there is found a material result; a sum of productive forces, a

[187] Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future. The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions*. (London: Verso, 2005), 168.

[188] Marx and Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party" in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker. (New York, W.W. Norton and Company, 1978), 470. The preface further states that the wording would be different if the document was written today, as the political conditions are "entirely changed."

historically created relation of individuals to nature and to one another….It shows that circumstances make men just as much as men make circumstances."[189]

Careful readers of Marx would understand that communism was not a fixed set of properties that once achieved would remain the same; instead communism or capitalism would always be contingent on the historical circumstances. Rather, the resolutions of such problems and antagonisms would be an ongoing process, evident by the number of tense disputes over the most efficient ways to design cost effective residential quarters, communal housing and collectivized services to meet the ever growing urban population. One of the well-respected urban theorists and author of the landmark publications *Sotsgorod* (1930), Nikolai Miljutin, who was originally the People's Commissar for Finance, obsessed over issues of waste, building cost and eliminating overcrowding, which he saw as among the most serious obstacles to socialist construction. In the foreword to his book, he offers a sober and cautious approach:

> This book by no means pretends to offer an exhaustive solution to all problems concerned in the planning of settlements in the U.S.S.R.…We must carefully evaluate the basic technical and material capabilities which we have at our disposal at present and make, if only in outline forms, some first concrete decisions about dwellings for the workers in this first stage of socialism. [190]

[189] Marks and Engels, "German Ideology" in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 164-165.

[190] Nikolai A. Miljutin, *Sotsgorod: The Problem of Building Socialist Cities*, trans. Arthur Sprague, (George R. Collins and William Alex), 49.

He continues to stress that decisions must be based on the overall material conditions in the U.S.S.R., including the level of technology and the availability of building materials.

Despite progressive thinking, housing shortages persisted. The 13th Party Congress recognized in 1924 that housing was the "most important question in the material life of the workers."[191] With that, interest in workers' housing, proximity to work, transportation to work, elimination of useless labor, elimination of useless chores, play, etc., were paramount in legitimating the revolutionary government's rhetoric about the worker class.[192] Let us not forget Nikolai Izgoev's admonition to build skyscrapers for banks and offices when there were no places to live. According to Izgoev, such construction should be postponed, especially when the previous construction season was marked by material shortages.[193] Lenin was known to have rebuked Mayakovskii's poem that urged for pumping concrete into the sky, saying, "why pump it [cement] into the sky,

[191] Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture, A Critical History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), 173. This problem of housing across Europe was featured in an article in *SA* no. (1929): 38-39 by S. Lisagor, "Mezhdynarodneii kongress po zhilishnomy i gradoStroitel'stvo." Moscow was certainly not unique in having shortage of low cost housing; Western capitals were very much behind in addressing housing shortages. Lisagor also makes note of the bourgeois shortfalls of addressing workers' housing. Prior to the revolution, economic viability dictated what buildings were to be built. William C. Brumfield's "Architectural Design in Moscow, 1890-1917: Innovation and Retrospection" in *Reshaping Russian Architecture: Western Technology, Utopian Dream,"* ed. William C. Brumfield. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 69. Moscow's population doubled between 1860's to 1897 though most of it "accommodated only a small, if growing, segment of the population with disposable income." Brumfield takes his footnote from Akademia Nauk, 1954, Institut Istorii, *Istoria Moskvy,* vol. 4 (Moscow: Akademiia Nauk, 1954).

[192] Ironically, given the chance to design a city (Magnitagorsk) in totality, the task was given to the foreign architect and city planner, Ernst May.

[193] N.Izgoev, *Konstrukzye Mosvye*, no 10, (1924):1-2.

when we need it here on earth?"[194] To the vexation of socialist builders, the building material that was most prevalent, in their words, was "Wood wood wood" and the technology available to them was "machines in the age of Leonardo da Vinci." [195] This would account for Mel'nikov's watercolor in 1920, which shows a plan for workers' houses built out of wood and Rodchenko's wooden furniture for the workers' club for the Soviet Pavilion. Eleven years later, wooden construction was on the rise as it cost 80 rubles per square meter versus 170 rubles for steel and concrete. Other benefits of wood construction included less need for engineers and technicians, shorter construction time, and thus had greater potential to relieve the housing shortage.[196]

Rather than an obsession with space or an ideal city, Russian architects were burdened by the regime of economy and the antiquated methods of construction that was the mainstay of even the most prestigious buildings being erected. Richard Pare concludes:

> The very stripped down Modernist style came to seem completely in tune with the times. In a sense the vocabulary of Modernism was enforced by the availability,

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[194] I. A. Armand, "Vospominania o Vladimire Il'iche Lenine (Recollections about Vladimir Il'ich Lenin)," Institut Marksizma-Leninizma [Institute of Marxism-Leninism], *Vospominania o Viadimire Il'iche Lenine v desiati tomakh[Recollections about Vladimir Il'ich Lenin in **10** vols.]*. Vol. **8** (Moskva: Izd-vo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1991) 99-107 (104). Cited in Vronskaya's "The Productive Unconscious: Architecture, Experimental Psychology and the Techniques of Subjectivity in Soviet Russia, 1919-1935," 98-99.

[195] A. N. Erlikh, "Mekanizatsia stroitelstva" *SA*, no. 3 (1926): 80-86. The article has very amusing images of combines, tractors, gears and pulleys.

[196] Wilm Stein, "Experiment: "Socialist Cities. Realization of communes too expensive—therefore postponed." Originally printed in *Bauwelt,* XXI Berlin (1931):703-4. Text comes from Lissitzky, *Russia: An Architecture for World Revolution*, 187.

> or rather the scarcity of materials. There is no excess and nothing superfluous. The whole concentration on efficiency, clarity and transparency was driven at least, in part, by necessity.[197]

The rubric of economy may account for why the modernist aesthetic was not always well-received. French writer and surgeon Georges Duhamel, for example, wrote in his *Voyage de Moscou* (1927) that production of art under constructivist principles is without grace and grandeur that inspires a poignant/ disappointed melancholy.[198] Sometimes he is generous with his vision of Russian cities, seeing in them a hint of the future, particularly in Moscow. "Russia is not rich enough to build a lot," he states, "but in Moscow, the swarm/tumult of buildings are harmoniously built into the city."[199]

When modernist buildings were designed and then built, the resources were often imported, not just the talent but the materials as well. Fenestration, concrete panels were built in Germany and brought to Russia. Western advances and design were expensive for Russia.[200] Indeed, plans like Le Corbusier's *Tzentrosoyuz* appear absurd in light of the material shortages, especially the expensive heating and cooling system, not to mention the red tuffa imported from the Caucus Mountains that faced the building. Bruno Taut

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[197] Richard Pare, *Building the Revolution: Soviet Art and Architecture 1915-1935.* Richard Pare was the exhibition curator.

[198] Georges Duhamel, *Le Voyage du Moscou,* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1927, 1968), 170.

[199] Duhamel, *Le Voyage du Moscou*, 170. Original text:"…car la Russie nouvelle n'est pas assez riche pour construire beaucoup; à Moscou notamment, ells sont donc absorbées dans la vieille ville et le grouillement fond l'ensemble, l'harmonise."

[200] Bliznakova, "The Realization of Utopia: Western Technology and Soviet Avant-Garde Architecture," 157 and 160.

bluntly described it as "an orgy of glass and steel."[201] Such profligacy is no different from the excesses of bourgeois architecture. Can a legitimate claim for luxury be made for Marxist or proletarian architecture? Critics that see Stalinist architecture as pompous forget to acknowledge that the modernist, constructivist buildings may have looked economical and efficient, but building them was not, begging the question, if the formal features of "legitimate" Modernism have any real value beyond aesthetics?"

Initially, the members who argued for modernist architecture were attracted to the simplicity, functionality and standardization, but under the circumstances of material shortages and skilled labor, it was less expensive to build in the style of Zholtovskii than in the style of Le Corbusier. At the first, and only, conference of OSA in April, 1928, Gan defined goals of the association and in point 3 categorically rejected research into abstract forms that were divorced from social function and could not be realized or completed.[202] The acknowledgement of unrealistic or utopian impulses by cultural theorists and architects does suggest that those tendencies existed, but recognizing that they did and discouraging them is precisely the open and complex dialogue one would expect. Denying the existence of wishful thinking on the part of city dwellers and those participating in the socialist reconstruction would imply a false sense of stability and reality and oblivion to the expectation of the public.

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[201] Meyer is quoted in Cohen's *Mystique of the of U.S.S.R.,* 49.

[202] Gan, "Rezolutzya po dokladam ideologicheskoi sektzie OSA, prenyatiya na pervoi konferenzei obshestva sovremennih arhitekterov v Moskve 25 aprelia 1925 goda," 78.

By no means were debates about utopian impulses over in the 1930s. A documentary produced in 1978 on Russian architecture features contemporary Soviet architects and their discussion of post-revolutionary architecture. A segment is devoted to a discussion of Konstantin Mel'nikov and his architecture. One of the architects proclaims, "He [Mel'nikov] was working on Utopia," while another architect disagrees saying, "It is not true. He wanted to see things realized. You consider the way his buildings were built, bricks carried by hand, wood and primitive buildings methods, it is amazing. The buildings of the future were erected by medieval construction methods." He adds, "Mel'nikov said he wanted to see things realized. Of course we all did." Another architect chimes in, "They can say it is utopian [he is referring to architectural models and drawings] but it is not. It is just another side of architectural art that one can compare with the results that will not be seen today or tomorrow; but they give an impression or an idea of architecture of the future and that is why it interests people. No one wants to build a glass tower but to see a direction of thought."[203] The documentary confirms that designating Soviet architecture as utopian continued to be challenged as far as 1978.

[203] Author O. Sviblova, director: Z. Fomina, Documentary film, file 32255 (1978). The architects interviewed were not named. The documentary discussed Mel'nikov's popularity during the early years and the waning of his style in favor of Stalin's style art.

An Identity of a Building

Soviet scholar Elena Borisova describes the façade of buildings as encoded text, with every decorative feature as a word in a larger allegorical context.[204] If we consider the city with its architectural features and its spaces like a novel, what do the ornate buildings say in contrast to the unadorned ones? Consider too, the fluctuation of those meanings. Such semiotic-based theories have been popular for describing cities and buildings, appropriating concepts like syntax, synecdoche and the like. It is a convenient method of considering the story a city is telling. We may acknowledge that cities speak or may be read as a kind of text but what exactly they are saying and how they are saying it, remains open-ended.

Soviet modernists understood and promoted in publications such as *Sovremennaia Arhitektura*, that social realities were expressed by the formal styles in architecture. However, conceptions of socialism and modern varied with time and were not always clearly understood. *Stroitel'stvo Moskvy,* demonstrates the vacillating taste of the proletariat who complain that there were not enough communal homes and expressed a desire for new architectural forms. In the 10th issue of *Stroitel'stvo Moskvy* (1929) the editorial states, "Society is deeply convinced that we need new architectural forms, old

[204] In Brumfield's *Origins of Modernism in Russian Architecture*, xx.

styles are rejected, and therefore many architects are using styles of new architecture."[205] But what these "new forms" are is unfortunately not specified.

The debates about formalism were part of an ongoing dialogue featured in *Soviet Architecture* and *SA* and in the schools like VKhUTEMAS. Rather than look to earthy, peasant, hand-made organic forms—still evident in Mel'nikov's watercolor—organic motifs had already been coopted by Art Nouveau and preferred by the bourgeoisie. The factory and the machine aesthetic, as the physical material loci/site of workers' realities, appeared to be the appropriate choice for socialist housing. Not everyone saw technology as the natural style for the proletariat. Lissitzky, for one, saw the obsession with technology as "mecanomania"[206] Trotsky, for another, questioned why Tatlin's *Tower to the Third International* had to rotate? [207] Formal features had to have some accountability.

In addition to competing versions of Socialism and modernity, Russian architecture also suffered from an identity crisis. Prior to the 1917 revolution, when Russia was involved in the Russo Japanese war (1904-1905) and World War I, the question on the minds of artists and architects was what represented patriotic, national architecture? Did Russia even have an architectural style to speak of? The general public was also uncertain as to what their taste might be. Just as the country was turning

[205] Moscow City Council, "Arhitektura zhitelnih damof" *Stroitel'stvo Moskvy*, no. 10 (1929): 8-13. In the 1929 issues, one cannot be sure if the preference was Mel'nikov's expressive style—as the issue praises Mel'nikov's and Golosov's worker clubs—or for Zholtovskii's classical motifs.

[206] Pare, *Building a Revolution,* 16.

[207] Anatolii Kopp, *Constructivist Architecture in the USSR* (London: Academy Editions, 1985), 19.

towards classicism or to the style exemplified by Zholtovskii after the 1930s, the population had become fond of the modernist buildings.[208] Kaganovich, speaking in 1933 confessed, "Of course one can say that the style of Soviet architecture is the majesty of beautiful simplicity, purposefulness, the strength of buildings, a break with fantasy and hesitation. But as soon as you try to turn these general formulations into the language of architectural form, you will see how complicated the problem is."[209]

Speaking in 1934, the usually critical A. Turkenidze made a surprisingly conciliatory remark:

> In Moscow we now have three buildings about which one can fight: professor Vesnin's *Palace of Culture*, Zholtovskii's building, and Le Corbusier's building. It is no accident that there is a lot of discussion surrounding each of these three buildings. There is no reason to take fright that on the streets of Moscow buildings like Zholtovskii's, Vesnin's *Palace of Culture* and Le Corbusier's building are realized, because, without repeating any one of them we can gain useful insights from each of these buildings.[210]

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[208] Danilo Udovichki-Selb, "Between Modernism and Socialist Realism Soviet Architectural Culture under Stalin's Revolution from Above, 1928-1938" in *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* vol. 68, no 4 (2009): 467.

[209] L. M. Kaganovich, "Speech of comrade Kaganovich at a Meeting of Architects," 26 September, 1934. RGASPI, f. 81. op. 3, d. 184,1. 114. Cited in Anderson, "The Future of History: The Cultural Politics of Soviet Architecture, 1928-41" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2010).

[210] Anderson, "The Future of History: The Cultural Politics of Soviet Architecture, 1928-41," 134. Quoting from "Uroki maiskoi arhitekturnoi vystavki: tvorcheskaia diskussiia v Soiuze sovetskikh arhitektorov,"*Arhitektura SSSR* 2, no. 6 (1934): 8.

Still, one can see the diversity of building styles which are neither being endorsed nor supported, leaving on the face of it, a great deal of latitude for architects.

Surely, to locate Soviet taste, one certainly would not look to Petrograd, the tsarist capital, which, architecturally speaking, was an unabashed import from the civilized West. Moscow, the far older capital retained the older, more "authentic" forms of architecture. These seemingly authentic monuments, nevertheless, relied heavily on Byzantine influences, mainly as an allegiance to Greek Orthodoxy; and so the default "national" style reverted back to Byzantine models. The other option for Slavophiles was peasant village architecture (figs. 22, 1).[211] Peasant, or wood architecture was however unrealistic for permanent, sustainable, long-term and multi-use city architecture. Much of Moscow, in fact, was comprised of wooden architecture, and the task was to replace these structures with more durable alternatives.

To locate the taste of the proletariat was even more elusive than identifying national architecture. In the end, it was economic reality that determined the style to be associated with the workers. With building costs as one of the primary concerns, filigree or any expensive embellishment had to be rejected, and so too projects like Tatlin's ambitious *Monument to the Third International* (1920) (fig. 23).[212] After the revolution,

[211] The Vesnin brothers built in the Byzantine style prior to the revolution. As few theorists and architects knew exactly what a truly Russian style looked like, some looked to the village life for "authenticity" while others looked to the stable Byzantine tradition. Though Style Moderne with its allegiance to plant motifs had similarity to peasant folk art, it was however viewed as a bourgeois import.

[212] Tatlin and many of his contemporaries understood that the "monument" was unrealizable. Lacking the materials, it was a project for the future, though at the time it served more as a metaphor, and not a blueprint for an actual building. His work could be legitimately argued as utopian. It is worth noting that while the function of the design was unrealizable, the Shabalov's *Radio Tower* constructed in 1922 looks remarkably similar to the formal qualities of the Third International (fig, 2:3).

the scarcity of building materials and their cost necessitated standardization with no superfluous ornamentation. This frugality aligned nicely with modernist movements in the West, particularly Germany, but also with the theories of Loos, and Spengler who viewed ornamentation as a sign of degeneracy. In the years shortly after the revolution the Soviet avant-garde aligned itself with the theories of Loos, who argued that ornamentation was the expression of bourgeois taste, and that simple, standardized forms were more efficient and represented the workers' taste.[213] Ornamentation was reduced to an absolute minimum because of finances, to be sure, but also to accentuate the basic forms from which a building derives its beauty.[214] One could also argue that the simplified, geometric shapes based on principles of order and rationality have their foundation in Classical architecture, which remained popular throughout Russian cities. It is then possible to see the simplified modern forms of Constructivism under a similar rubric.

Early on, Soviet artists were inspired by French, German and Italian modern movements, but those influences ran their iteration to an end with Kazimir Malevich's *Black Square* 1915. Khan-Magomedov argues and Danilo Udovichki-Selb supports the view that the Soviet modernist aesthetic had internal roots and continued to influence

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[213] For more on Loos' ideas of modern architecture, see Adolf Loos *On Architecture*, eds. Adolf and Daniel Opel, trans. Michael Mitchell (Riverside: Ariadne Press, 1995). His essay "Guided Tours of Apartments" from 1907 makes clear that ornamentation is unnatural for the modern man and a waste of labor. Ornamentation stands in opposition of what is modern, that is whatever has managed to "escape improvement" by architects.

[214] Starr, *Mel'nikov Solo Architect in Mass Society*, 25.

architects beyond Socialist Realism. Udovichki-Selb's image to image comparison of Malevich's *Arhitektoni* from the 1920s to the much ridiculed Iofan's *Palace of the Soviets* 1937 maquette underscores the influence that Malevich and Lissitzky continued to have on architects working in the 1930s (fig. 24). Moreover, Malevich would place Lenin atop his *Arhitektoni* for the 1932 exhibition "Soviet Artists in the Last Fifteen Years." With Lenin placed atop of Malevich's model, the comparison with Iofan's model becomes even more striking.[215]

Lissitzky was particularly influential for the direction architecture would take after the Revolution. Magomedov believes that Lissitzky was able to see the possibility of a new style, as he worked as a painter, sculptor and architect. [216] In a lecture at INKhUK, Lissitzky defined his own *Prouns* as neither painting nor *architecture*. [217] Among the early plans for Moscow, Shchusev proposed injecting wedges of green spaces into the heart of the capital, as though penetrating the heart of the inner city recalls Lissitksy's *Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge* from 1919 (fig. 25). This revolutionary symbolism, was, according to Mel'nikov the source of inspiration for city planning,

[215] Danilo Udovichki-Selb, "The Evolution of Soviet Architectural Culture in the First Decade of Stalin's `Perestroika'" in *Rondheim Studies on East European Cultures & Societies*, no 28 (January 2009): 51. The similarity is also noted in Christina Lodder's "Living in Space: Kazimir Malevich's Suprematist Architecture and the Philosophy of Nikolai Fedorov," in Rethinking Malevich: Proceedings of a Conference in Celebration of the 125th Anniversary of Kazimir Malevich's Birth, eds. Charlotte Douglas and Christina Lodder (London: The Pindar Press and The Malevich Society, 2007), 190-191.

[216] S.O. Khan-Mahomedov, "Creative Trends 1917-1932" in *Building in the USSR 1917-1932*, ed. Oleg Aleksanderovich Shvidkovsky (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971), 10.

[217] It is noteworthy, however, that he named some of his constructions as "city" or a "bridge."

rather than in German or English utopian planning as some would suspect.[218] Mel'nikov's design for Moscow also draws its influence from Lissitzky's wedges that appear to penetrate Moscow's rings (fig. 26). Judging from a side photograph of his Soviet Pavilion for the French Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes, the wedge also appears alongside the grand staircase (fig. 27).

Senkevich argued that despite the seeming revolutionary ideas of the Rationalists, and the Constructivists, their thinking grew out of 19th-century theories espoused by Kraskovsky's rationalist framework. It was he who advocated for contemporary materials.[219] Some, including Senkevich and Camilla Gray, suggested that theories of the Soviet avant-garde may be situated not as a response to the October revolution and communist ideologies but rather in 19th-century precedents and industrialism in general.[220] Judging by the works and architectural examples, it may be argued that indeed, the style and ideologies of the avant-garde may be located in the general critique or embrace of machine aesthetic, the promises of industrialization and positivists attitudes that were popular in the 19th and early 20th century. Even Ginzburg's progressive

[218] Starr, *Mel'nikov Solo Architect in Mass Society*, 42.

[219] Senkevich , *Trends in Soviet Architectural Thought, 1917-32: The Growth and Decline of the Constructivist and Rationalist Movements,* 99.

[220] Senkevich, *Trends in Soviet Architectural Thought, 1917-32: The Growth and Decline of the Constructivist and Rationalist Movements,* 114. Camilla Gray, *The Russian Experiment in Art 1863-1922,* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1962), 9. Gray locates the germination to an art colony supported by a railroad tycoon, Savva Mamontov.

Narkomfin, had its precedent in Fourier's Phalanstre, with its rooftop garden for socializing.[221]

If precedents can be found in 19th and 20th-century examples, how much did the Revolution and Marxist ideology actually generate? Lissitzky, however, believed that their ideas were grounded in the works of "monumental propaganda" initiated shortly after the revolution by Lenin and Lunacharskii.[222] Shortly after the Revolution, socialism was understood as collective living, where members would eat together, relax together, and share household chores like childrearing. Trotsky spells out the broad parameters for socialist architecture: It ought to be dedicated to building "people's home, a hotel for the masses, a commons, a community house, or a school of gigantic dimensions" rather than building temples or castles. Furthermore, the materials and methods used ought to reflect the economic condition of the country at that particular moment.[223] Consequently, "a socialist 'house' could hardly be envisioned without communal kitchens, communal laundry facilities, dining halls, and child-care centers."[224] In addition to, these socialist

[221] Choay, *The Modern City: Planning in the 19th Century*, 97.

[222] Lissitzky, " *Russian Architecture for World Revolution*," 339.

[223] Senkevich, *Trends in Soviet Architectural Thought, 1917-32: The Growth and Decline of the Constructivist and Rationalist Movements*, 30.

[224] Communal laundries existed in Europe and in the US, before they were realized in Russia. Anatolii Kopp, *Constructivist Architecture in the USSR* , 87.

facilities would depend on comforts made possible by electricity, gas, contemporary building materials, technology, and integrated public transport. [225]

Still, one also wonders if the collectivization of services like kitchen and laundromats was based more on economic exigencies rather than communist ideologies. To accommodate large groups of workers during housing shortages, it makes perfect sense to communalize services to save cost and money. The majority of the workers were already living in communal housing before the war. For them, there was nothing revolutionary in sharing a dwelling, as the image of a communal dwelling confirms (fig. 28).

After the Industrial Revolution, the Old World, including Russia, saw an unprecedented influx of workers and with it, haphazard and often inadequate attempts to house them. Prior to the revolution, as the Central State Archive of Moscow files indicate, submissions to the city for construction purposes was primarily establishing property rights and ownership, rather than negotiating any health or safety approval. [226] Pre-revolutionary concerns over housing needs of workers were non-existent and were left to market demands. Landowners initiated housing for private or market gain, instead of social benefit. Individual taste and finance were the immediate concerns. Lissitzky

[225] Paperny, *Architecture in the Age of Stalin: Culture Two* trans. John Hill and Raonn Barris. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 9.

[226] Conversation with Nadezhda Nikolaevna, June 2014. Main Moscow Archive (Central State Archive of Moscow). Studies of tenement housing, both in Europe and the US in the early part of the 20th century and 19th century showed that safety and hygiene was not on the minds of landlords as Engels detailed in *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1844), there were efforts on the part of cities to confront the sewage and water safety in 19th-century Chicago and in Paris.

and many others lamented that these type of capitalist preoccupations lead to haphazard city planning and building.

Among the most prescient needs articulated by Soviet Socialists was the reality of insufficient housing. Walter Benjamin described the crisis in 1927: "Apartments that earlier accommodated single families in their five to eight rooms now often lodge eight. Through the hall door one steps into a little town. More often still, an army camp. Even in the lobby one can encounter beds."[227] People can bear to exist in such tight quarters, only because "their dwelling place is the office, the club, the street." Ginzburg also noted: "No wonder the problem of workers' housing has become the most characteristic problem of modern architecture, [not] only here in Russia but throughout Europe as well." [228]

What is Modern, if not Old?

If socialist art was a contentious concept, the idea of what it means to be "modern" was even more so. As Loos remarked,

> Our modern products were treated with contempt, both by artists and by the authorities. I pointed out that it was not necessary to develop a style for our times since it already existed. Our machines, our clothes, our carriages and harnesses,

[227] Benjamin, "Moscow," 108.

[228] Ginzburg, *Style and Epoch,* 77.

> our glassware and metalware, in fact everything that had managed to escape "improvement" by our architects, was modern.[229]

The modern, according to Loos, was an effortless expression of the times. Perhaps this may account for why so many 20th –century artists and architects embraced the machine as the leitmotif of the age. Soviet architects were descendants of the expired French Style Moderne that had originally proclaimed itself as "modern."[230] In a matter of a few years, the Soviet modernists had to distance themselves from the Style Moderne as it became an archaic modern. As a result, architect Ginsburg and editors of *Sovremennaia Arhitektura* (Contemporary Architecture) labeled their works as "contemporary," rather than "modern." And Grigorii Barkhin placed his *Izvestiia* in front of the Style Moderne building to protest that what was once modern, no longer is. Indeed, Soviet artists and architects were keenly aware of the modern movements and their supposed expiration dates.[231]

What are the geographic and temporal borders of "modernism?" The literary critic, member of the Communist Party and author of the popular *The Country and the City* (1973), Raymond Williams had the following to say about historical discussions of Modernism: "The retention of such categories as `modern' and `Modernism' to describe

[229] Loos, *On Architecture*, 53.

[230] Style Moderne may be characterized as French Art Deco. It peaked in 1925 with the Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes held in Paris.

[231] For a thorough guide to Soviet knowledge and engagement with Western modern art, see: *Russian and Soviet Views of Modern Western Art: 1890s to Mid-1930s* ed. Ilia Dorontchenkov, trans. Charles Rougle (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009). Also, and predating the former is: *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde Theory and Criticism 1902-1934* ed. John E. Bowlt (New York: Viking Press, 1976).

aspect of the art and thought of an undifferentiated twentieth-century world is now at best anachronistic, at worst archaic." Moreover, "It is important to emphasize how relatively old some of these apparently modern themes are."[232]

Kopp argues in his *Quand le modern n'est pas un style mais une cause* (When Modern is Not a Style but a Cause) that to be modern meant more than to be contemporary. [233] After all, you could be recycling imperial architecture over and over again and spending all your efforts on restoration. Kopp sees a general cohesion amongst the modernists in their attempt to transform life, and to create art for the masses, even though that cohesion exists more in history canons than in actual reality. However, as Wilk rightly points out, "As in the history of all sects, these avant-garde groups thrived on a vigorous condemnation of each other's efforts. [Theo]Van Doesburg accused the Bauhaus of romantic individualism, Le Corbusier accused De Stijl of being ornamental. By 1928, the serious split between functionalists and formalists was well established." [234] It would seem that every group was vying for their unique contribution and significance to the avant-garde vision of transforming life.

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[232] Raymond Williams, *The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists*, (London: Verso, 1989), 38. Others argue that all the main ideas of Modernism were identified by 1910. In other words, there was nothing new or modern to be said after 1910, so claimed the curator Christopher Wilk in *Modernism: Designing a New World 1914-1939,* 165. Several scholars see 1922 as the apogee of literary Modernism with the publication of T.S. Elliot's "The Wasteland" and James Joyce's *Ulysses*, to name a few.

[233] Anatolii Kopp, *Quand Le Modern N'est Pas Un Style Mais Une Cause,* (Paris: Ecole nationale supéreure des Beaux-Arts, 1988), 7-11.

[234] Wilk, *Modernism: Designing a New World 1914-1939,* 167.

Formalizing Aesthetics: Schools and Groups

Following the October Revolution numerous artistic institutions/schools were established. Within them, there were many factions and interchangeable faculty, all attempting to respond to the socialist program. There was MAO (Moscow Association of Architects) formed in 1922-32, ASNOVA (New Association of Architects) 1922-32 which later became ARU, (Association of Urban Architects) 1928-32, OSA (Association of Contemporary Architects) 1925-30, VOPRA (All-Russian Association of Proletarian Architects) 1929-32, VANO (Scientific All-Union Association of Architecture). VKhHUTEMAS later VKhUTEMAIN and INKhUK both founded in 1920 had significant influence on the creative landscape and may be likened to the Bauhaus. Listed are only Moscow institutions. The number of institutions also suggests the varied conceptions of what socialist art might mean. Moreover, they were all competing for state commissions, polarizing them against each other. Pavel Novitskii, complained in his "*Gegemonija arhitektury*" (Hegemony in Architecture) (1925) that the design for Moscow and what socialist architecture ought to look like was still isolated to few groups, noting:

> For some reason, questions of architecture interest only specialists. In Moscow, an excellent journal *SA*, is being published in which engineers and architects deliberate technical and social problems of practical construction. MAO (The Moscow Architecture Society) publishes competition projects. Aesthetes publish lyrical reports in *Izvestiia* about the extreme sterility of industrial architecture. In

> auditoriums of architectural faculties…a harsh struggle is being waged between the Rationalists and the Constructivists.[235]

To be sure, Alexii Shchusev, who designed Lenin's mausoleum, once remarked nostalgically to Viktor Vesnin:

> Nowadays whichever architects you turn to whether you go to OSA, ARU or ASNOVA you find new trends. Everything used to be much simpler and clearer. The gentry or aristocracy went to Fomin for designs, merchants to Zholtovskii and brothers of the church turned to me. We each knew our own dioceses and we never quarreled or squabbled.[236]

VKhUTEMAS and INKhUK had perhaps the most amount of respect with more distinguished faculty and have been subject of Western scholarship. These academic institutions had a number of students and as a result had the most profound impact on disseminating ideas on future architects and artists.

INKhUK was founded in 1920 in Moscow and became the leading artistic institution representing the views of the avant-garde. Wassily Kandinsky, who wrote the program for the institute only lasted a short while as president, apparently he, like Malevich, was too spiritual and idiosyncratic by the 1920s. It is obvious by his short tenure as president that Soviet modernists were uncertain of what was now modern, or, at

[235] Pavel Novitskii "Gegamonija Arhitektury" in *Revolutzyja I Kul'tura* no. 7 (1928): 49.

[236] A. Chinyakov, "The Vesnin Brothers" in *Building in the USSR 1917-1932* ed. Oleg Aleksanderovich Shvidkovky (New York: Praeger,1971), 48.

least, they felt that Kandinsky was not that modern anymore.[237] Moreover, the apocalypse had come and it was time to rebuild. The focus of many of the INKhUK members was precisely a constructive, and utilitarian, not idealistic model of art. These pragmatists celebrated machine forms and socially relevant art that could be mass produced or standardized. Gan, a vociferous member of this new direction wrote in his "Konstruktivist Manifesto" (Constructivist Manifesto) that artists must revolt against pure beauty, theological, metaphysical and mystical art.[238] Easel painting was viewed as too bourgeois and individualist. As Marx and Engels stated in *German Ideology*, "In a communist society there are no painters but at most people who engage in painting among other activities."[239] As a result of this attitude, students were abandoning painting and sculpture, and faculty like Rodchenko and Lavinsky officially refused to teach these bourgeois skills.[240]

Constructivists Naum Gabo and his brother Antoine Pevsner even dismissed Cubism, seeing it as obsolete—a formal exercise that never went beyond its initial experimentation. It may have "started with simplification of the representative technique

[237] The writing was on the wall, so to speak when even Malevich found Kandisky's aesthetic too subjective and individualistic. See: Elena Basner, "The Yearly Work of Malevich and Kandinsky: A Comparative Analysis" in *Rethinking Malevich: Proceedings of a Conference of the 125th Anniversary of Kazimir Malevich's Birth* (London: Pinder Press and The Malevich Society, 2007), 39. For Constructivist views on Malevich see: Aleksei Gan, "Spravka o Kazmir Malevicha" *SA*, no 3 (1927): 104.

[238] In Ginzburg, *Style and Epoch*, 28.

[239] Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, 109.

[240] Magomedov, *Vesnin*, 136.

but ended with its analysis and stuck there." [241] They saw cubism as meaningless for anyone who had experienced a revolution and are building something new. Ironically, Productivists claimed that Gabo was divorced from everyday reality. He was, according to them, too metaphysical.[242] To complicate matters further, VOPRA, which was described as the most slanderous and least talented of the groups, voiced their disdain frequently and urgently in various publications.

Despite the seeming commitments to communism made by the various architectural groups, they scrutinized each other for failing to address socialist building. The heavy rhetoric and jargon coming both from the Constructivists and the Rationalists made them easy targets. Not only was Gan's hyper-Constructivist rhetoric debated and challenged in the 1920s, it was rejected in the 1930s. A former member of Contemporary Architecture, and former Constructivist himself, Andrei Burov wrote:

> From the point of view of handling material, Constructivism was nothing but archaism. . . .Material and structure prevailed over form. The style was Baroque (without ornamentation), for the project was planned in an imaginary material (reinforced concrete is not brick). There was a strong Muslim influence and

[241] They are quoted in Senkevich, *Trends in Soviet Architectural Thought, 1917-32: The Growth and Decline of the Constructivist and Rationalist Movements* 130. Naum Gabo and Antoine Pevsner, "Realisticheskii Manifest" (1920): 151-152.

[242] Senkevich, *Trends in Soviet Architectural Thought, 1917-32: The Growth and Decline of the Constructivist and Rationalist Movements*, 139.

> orthodox Muhammedenism that; by way of decoration only clocks and letters were allowed. [243]

In other words, strict formalism was equated with metaphysics. Rationalists, including Ladvoskii were labeled as Neo-Kantian, guilty of being overly consumed with form over content and social context. [244] One could hardly expect uniformity in ideology, for Modernism or Socialism; in the ten years of the avant-garde architecture department at INKhUK, three student revolts took place, leading ultimately to creation of new factions within INKhUK, including the creation of OSA (Union of Contemporary Architects).[245]

VKhUTEMAS promoted a more utilitarian approach to art, and many leading Constructivists taught there, but they, too, were not immune to dissent in what direction to follow. Faculty organized according to varied goals. The Constructivist group, or, the larger and more prominent of the groups, was interested in "a heightened expression of structure as an end in itself." And as one of their members, Vesnin, advocated, "Art must be pure constructions, devoid of the ballast of representation.…"[246] At the same time, the Rationalists, directed by Ladovskii, were interested in "rational expression of structure"

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[243]Andrei Burov, *About Architecture,* 26. Quote is reprinted in V. Khazanova's "A Burov 1900-57" in *Building in the USSR 1917-1932*. Ed. O.A. Shvidkovsky. 118-119. Rowe and Koetter also describe some of the modernist tendencies as exhibiting "apostolic poverty, of a quasi-Franciscan *Existenz minimum*," 11.

[244] Senkevich, *Trends in Soviet Architectural Thought, 1917-32: The Growth and Decline of the Constructivist and Rationalist Movements,* 302.

[245] Magomedov, Vesnin, 136. In 1931, OSA formed into *Sektor arhitektorov sotsialisticheskogo stroitel'stva* (Section of Architects of Socialist Construction, SASS). See Anderson "The Future of History: The Cultural Politics of Soviet Architecture, 1928-41," 72.

[246] S.O. Kahn-Mahomedov, "Creative Trends 1917-32," 13.

with a focus on the perception of space.[247] However varied their theoretical visions, a particular kind of formalism subsumed the faculty and students at VKhUTEMAS. It is no wonder that during the 1920s and 1930s it is difficult to distinguish a Rationalist from a Constructivists, and even old-school architects like Shchusev and Zholtovskii and Fomin were working in the same vocabulary as the Constructivists and Rationalists.

Rowe and Koetter were right to some degree when they saw modernist architects of the Marxist variety to be overly focused on the "naked" and "truthful" aspect of architecture. The Productivists' interest in the origin of physical matter, meaning how industrial and production changed material, led to a narrow focus on materials.[248] The Productivists also claimed that what they were doing was not, art but communism. They were no longer making art for exhibits but art and life were one and the same. Rodchenko stated, "You wish to make art for art's sake. We, after all wrote the program for communism, inasmuch as we really want to create something new, and not simply to create for exhibits which nobody attends."[249] Such boastful comments let to consternation from Lenin, who affirmed, "Proletarian culture is not clutched out of thin air; it is not a concoction of those who call themselves experts in proletarian culture."[250]

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[247] S.O. Kahn-Mahomedov, "Creative Trends 1917-32," 13.

[248] Senkevich, *Trends in Soviet Architectural Thought, 1917-32: The Growth and Decline of the Constructivist and Rationalist Movements,* 141.

[249] Senkevich, 142. Take for example, Rodchenko's quotes from Zhadova's "O teorii sovestskogo sizaina 20-kh godov" in *voprosy tehnicheskoi estetiki*, no.1 (1968): 87.

[250] Senkevich, 26, takes the quote from Lenin's "Zadachi soiuzov molodezhy" in V.I. Lenin *O literature I isskustv.*, 443. Lenin made the statement at the 1920 Congress of the Young Communist League.

The City is Not a White Cube

The artist Brian O'Doherty highlighted in "Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space" (1976) what happens to artwork that hangs inside the pristine white walls of a modern gallery.[251] They hang suspended as if outside time and without context. He observed, "It often feels as if we can no longer experience anything if we don't first alienate it. In fact, alienation may now be a necessary preface to experience."[252]

Likewise, there is a common practice within art and architectural publications of isolating buildings from the surrounding architecture. Pare's 2007 publication *The Lost Vanguard*: *Russian Modernist Architecture 1922-1932* is but one example.[253] It is not unlike isolating Malevich's *Black Square* from its corner position in the "0, 10" exhibition (fig. 29). I see this as a failure to acknowledge what we all must surely know: the urban environment is a collage and that for better or worse, buildings and artwork, for that matter, have co-dependent relationships with the surrounding architecture and space. To illustrate this point, consider Renaat Braem's *Administrative Centre* (1952-1967) in Antwerp as a testament that a building's context is undeniably significant (fig. 30). The building towers above the houses, like an acrolith among pebbles. Its presence in the city is striking and alarming, not just because of scale but in the difference of style and

[251] Brian O'Doherty's original text was printed in Artforum (1976) and reprinted in O'Doherty's *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (Santa Monica: The Lapis Press, 1986).

[252] O'Doherty, "Inside the White Cube," 51.

[253] Richard Pare, *The Lost Vanguard: Russian Modernist Architecture 1922-1932.* Forward Phyllis Lambert. Essay by Jean-Louis Cohen, (Monacelli Press, 2007). Apart from isolating the buildings from their surroundings, the photographs focus especially on the disrepair of the sites.

materials to its immediate surroundings. How can one deny its existence in relation to its environment? The influential Bolshevik Revolutionary Nikolai Bukharin cautioned, "You can isolate any phenomenon of social life you like, any fragment or series, but if in this fragment, in this phenomenon or in a complex of phenomena you do not see its life function, that is, you do not regard it as a certain organic part of a social whole, then you will never understand these phenomena."[254]

Even without the intention of the architect or artists, their work enters into an uncontrolled field of perception and response. To give Pare and others the benefit of the doubt, perhaps the complexity of these spatial relationships is ignored in favor of easy apprehension. But what does that serve us, apart from neglecting to instruct the readers that buildings exist in the physical and experiential reality of the city or countryside? Does this oversight feed into or reject the theory that fragmentation is the modern experience par excellence, apparent in every modern metropolis?

Conceptions of Modernism: The Problem with Modern

Attempts to organize or universalize a single version of European Modernism, at least the formal qualities, was disparaged by the Constructivists when Le Corbusier listed "five points of a new architecture" or badges of Modernism.[255] Articulating qualities of

[254] Bukharin, "O formal'nom metode v iskusstve", *Karsnaia nov'*, no. 3, (1925): 225. Senkevich, *Trends in Soviet Architectural Thought, 1917-32: The Growth and Decline of the Constructivist and Rationalist Movements*, 36.

[255] Wilk, *Modernism: Designing a New World 1914-1939*, 162.

the modern, the way Le Corbusier had done, would mean that to be "modern" was equivalent to simply knowing what to wear. However, if no formal features could be codified for a socialist building, any building could potentially be designated as bourgeois or revolutionary. No wonder formal qualities became a subject of vehement debates and refutations. Are cylinders and cubes, a staple of modernist buildings inherently modern? Of course not. Could the Constructivists claim it as their own style more so than the Neo-classicists?

According to Magomedov, the Constructivists were indeed concerned that their innovations might become adopted as mere style and copied by others. As a result they rejected "style." [256] If Modernism were reduced to just style, any architect could simply copy this "Modern" style without any real commitment to Modernism or what it stood for. Anyone, even someone who did not aspire to Modernism's ideologies, as was the case with the academicians Zholtovskii and Shchusev could design modernist buildings (figs. 31, 32). It was hardly form following function, but the other way around. The "real" adherents to "Modernism" advocated for architecture to be directed by the natural impulses that a building's purpose dictated.[257] A factory would thus generate forms that were conducive to production and so forth. The Constructivists also focused on utilitarian principles of standardization and prefabrication to avoid stylistic excess.[258] The machine aesthetic and the engineer became a leitmotif for the Constructivists. Although

[256] Magomedov, "Creative Trends, 1917-32," 15.

[257] Wilk, *Modernism: Designing a New World 1914-1939,* 160.

[258] Maghomedov, *Creative Trends,* 15.

this reductivism was later criticized as "mecanomania" that was, in and of itself, a sign of fetishization and idealization. ASNOVA, for example, found the Constructivist's machine aesthetic as a shallow preoccupation.

The criticisms Constructivists and Formalists, in general, were to encounter were anticipated by the rejection of the Literary Formalist School (1921-25). Once celebrated for their experimentation with language, they came to be seen as divorced from real life, as mere adherents to style. Any preconceived presumptions, which were not grounded in purely empirical and descriptive premises, were understood to be idealistic.[259] If ideological constructs are independent and self-contained entities, they are ultimately frivolous. Outside of pragmatic lived experience of, say, language or architecture, their views were too idealistic and hence metaphysical. Trotsky leveled the following critique at them: "The Formalists are followers of St. John. They believe that `In the beginning was the Word.' But we believe that in the beginning was the deed. The word followed as its phonetic shadow."[260] But as Viktor Erlich points out that this label of "idealistic" was applied to just about anything that did not have its roots in dialectic materialism.

Lunacharskii had a similar disregard towards Formalists, seeing them as escapists and inheritors of a decadent, sterile ruling class. He wrote, "The only type of art which the modern bourgeoisie can enjoy and understand is non-objective and purely formal

[259] Viktor Erlich, *Russian Formalism: History-Doctrine* (The Hague-Paris: Mouton: 1969), 103.

[260] Erlich, *Russian Formalism: History-Doctrine*, 104. Taken from Trotsky's *Pechat' I revolutzya (Literature and Revolution),* 183.

art."[261] Lunacharskii believed that true art was driven by intense experience that could rule over the soul. On the surface, one would assume that formalism and its privilege of materiality would be raised as the model par excellence of Marxist art, but in fact, it came to be viewed, even before the Stalinification of art, as already vacuous and decadent. Modernism's formalism was therefore not too dissimilar to Style Moderne in its most extreme adherence. Malevich came to represent, for the Constructivists at least, as victim of blind adherence to an experimental path that became spiritual in its pursuits without any real application to life.[262] This was not unlike the criticism VOPRA leveled against the Constructivists, whom they thought were guilty of formalism without an understanding of the real material conditions, even though the original members of VOPRA had been Aleksander Vesnin's students.[263] Not surprising, artists wanted to disassociate themselves from formalism towards utilitarianism.[264]

Such attacks of superficiality were common, and no architectural group was immune from them. Similar critiques were made against formalism in architecture; the Rationalists were frequently chided for being overly interested in "formalism," rather than current, contextual reality and the purpose of the buildings. Critics, and there were many, saw them as revolutionary romantics operating on artificial semantics. I

[261] Erlich, *Russian Formalism: History-Doctrine*, 106. Lunacharskii's quote is from *Pechat' I revolutzya*, 25.

[262] Aleksei Gan, "Spravka o Kazmir Malevicha" *SA*, no. 3 (1927): 104.

[263] Udovichki -Selb, "Between Modernism and Socialist Realism," 472.

[264] Margarita Tupitsyn, "After Vitebsk: El LIssitzky and Kazimir Malevich, 1924-1929, *Situating El Lissitzky*, eds. Nancy Perloff and Brian Reed (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2003), 181.

Vereshchagin, for one, pointed out at the end of the 1920s that their rejection of all romanticism was, in itself, romantic.[265]

Nikolai Miljutin also came to criticize the formalist architects, stating,

> In city planning, this group of formalists ignores the social structures of the cities. Their formalistic plans do not show any analysis of existing flows of traffic and their intensity, reasonable location of the buildings, correct lighting, consideration of hydrometeorological factors and etc. . . . Some formalist are trying to find forms which express a certain symbol. For example: a circle is a symbol of eternity, a spiral—a revolutionary state, a cone—steadiness, cube—tranquility, square—immobility. The idea is not new, in church architecture there was ritual symbolism.[266]

In contrast, Bruno Taut, who began working in Moscow in 1926, assessed the situation in the U.S.S.R and had the following critiques. "Functionalism," he wrote, "in a sense of trite utilitarianism or, even worse, mere consideration of cost and profit, would surely mean the death of architecture."[267] He believed that architecture should not ignore spiritual concerns, in order to transcend purely formal or functional exercises in architecture. Furthermore, he saw artist/architects worshiping steel, glass, and concrete.

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[265] Vereshchagin is quoted in Ikonnikov, *Russian Architecture of the Soviet Period*, 127.

[266] A Nikolai Miljutin, "Osnovnye voprossi teorri sovetskoi arhitekturye" in *Sovetskaia Arhitektura* no. 6, Nov-Dec (1932): 6-7.

[267] Bruno Taut: "Russia's Architectural Situation." This unpublished manuscript was written in Berlin in November 2, 1929 and included with Lissitzky's *Russia: An Architecture for World Revolution*, 168.

"These moderns" he claims, "want to imbue the `new' materials with revolutionary ideology, thus elevating them to the symbols of their age. Furthermore, it is really very difficult for an outsider to understand the difference between the so-called `Constructivists' and the `formalists.'"[268]

The conclusions that one can draw from all the criticism of modernist aesthetics is that there was no convenient or stable conclusion over what revolutionary art and architecture really looks like. It is precisely as it should be; how can something be revolutionary if it depended utterly on established forms or ideologies. At the same time, from where does one get new forms without mining old ones for inspiration?

To conceptualize the city as a spectacle, whatever spectacle it may be— the way Haussmann had, for example in Paris—Moscow's city planners had to understand the purpose and ideology the city was to convey in its totality. For Haussmann and Napoleon III, Paris was redesigned to be a modern city, but one that also served the interests of the Second Empire. A city could thus work in the function of the ruling ideology, simply by the size of the streets and how they were laid out. This was not just a decision to support a grid plan that could easily be interpreted in the spirit of Enlightenment ideas, but a wholesale rearticulation of the city, including the elimination of the seedy neighborhoods where crime and disease threatened the image of reform. To the chagrin of twentieth century thinkers, a modern Paris also meant the loss of the itinerant individual and the

[268] Taut, "Russia's Architectural Situation," 170.

rise of the crowd.[269] But instead of an empowered crowd, it facilitated the ruling elite. Modern was not necessarily revolutionary.

Earnest plans to transform Moscow began to take place in 1924—coinciding with the implementation of the New Economic Policy—and were then circulated publicly in newspapers such as *Vechernaia Moskva.* In Friday's issue, the headline "New Moscow" includes a discussion by A. B. Shchusev, who articulated his vision of increasing Moscow rings, and states that the scientific body formed by the city council of Moscow possesses a ready plan for the city. This plan included the expansion of the rings that form the old Moscow. The rings are nominated by colors, white, red, and green; the *Belyi Gorod* (white city) was the central ring, of the original fortified enclosure. Green, as the garden city ring, was intended to refresh the air for the central white ring section.[270] The following month, *Vechernaia Moskva* ran an article "Big Moscow" and stated that there were two plans put forward for the city. It also stated that the population increases by 3.5% daily and that this increase must be accommodated. The article estimated that the population will rise to four million by 1940. One of the plans recommended increasing Moscow by 10 times. The radial circles were to have large massive forest sections, water arteries, wells, and rivers. The other plan was to break Moscow into 5 zones: 1. Central zone, 2, Ring zone, 3. Planned City Garden, 4. Forest Zone 5. Protective Zone (with railroad) is put forward in *Vechernaia Moskva*. Also in March *Vechernaia*

[269] Benjamin makes this observation in Convolutes C (Ancient Paris, Catacombs, Demolitions, Decline of Paris), *The Arcades Project,* 82-100.

[270] "Novaia Moskva" (New Moscow), *Vechernaia Moskva* no. 51, Friday 29, Feb 1924.

Moskva included a discussion with professor Bernatoskomy on Shchusev and engineer Shestakova's plans in "Future Moscow." Here Bernatoskomy stated, "Big Moscow and New Moscow do not contradict one another. The basic principles of both I consider them to be completely correct and I see nothing utopian about it. In both cases, they require necessary/essential characteristics."[271]

Incremental changes to a city may affect its life and its death. Traffic patterns and suburbs played a role in causing cities in the US to die. Though tragic for the US, it was a desired goal by many of the Marxist urban planners who saw the death of cities as natural evolution of capital. Automobiles and the building of infrastructure in the outskirts of a city would eventually make the city irrelevant or at least weaken the stronghold of capital that is historically concentrated in the metropolis. Soviet theorists understood this and either wanted to hurry its demise or stave it off. Lenin, for one, welcomed the death of the city.[272] Members of OSA and the editors of *SA* advocated for its demise, celebrating the automobile and electrification, as means of accomplishing the undertaking.[273]

Indeed, throughout the discussions of city planners, as expressed in *SA* under the heading: *Razselenye* (Urbanization), the following were of paramount importance for populated areas: redesign, intermixing of cultural and necessary institutions to avoid long

[271] *Vechernaia Moskva* No 63/83, "O Bydysheye Moskvyi" Sat 15, March 1924.

[272] From Wells' interview of Lenin in "The Dreamer in the Kremlin" in *Russia in the Shadows*, http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks06/0602371h.html#chap06.

[273] *SA*, multiple issues, (1930).

distance transportation, bringing them closer to infrastructure like electricity and refrigeration, in order to merge with commercial areas. In short, plans were drawn to facilitate the workers' access to places most often used and shorten the duration of travel to necessary buildings, electricity, water, etc.[274] A noteworthy design was proposed by engineer G. Krasin for the city of Moscow. His vision was based entirely on the time it would take to get from point A to B. All the districts of the city had to be within one hour of travel to the city center.[275]

When the Central Committee of the Communist party began giving clear directions, it was decided that old Moscow should not be destroyed, and rather than focus on small individual projects, Moscow reconstruction would be done according to one plan. It was also important to widen streets in densely populated areas and to remove the clutter of ornamentation from buildings.[276] Demolishing 40 percent of Moscow, as it was originally proposed, was foolish and expensive. The savings, as Meyer pointed out in 1931, could be channeled toward industry and defense.[277]

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[274] "Otchenaia rabota sektziye cotzelestichesk razselenye. Stroisektora Gosplana RSFSR"(Account of work in sectors of Socialist urbanization) in *SA* no. 6 (1930): 6. There is a detailed breakdown of the type of services and infrastructure that accompanies each time of region, from industrialized zones, agricultural zones, and mixed use zones.

[275] *Konstantin S. Mel'nikov and the Construction of Moscow,* 219.

[276] Nikolai Miljutin, "Zadachi Planerovki Moskvy," 1.

[277] Kurt Meyer, "Gradstroitestva Moskvye" translated from German in *Sovestskaia Arhitektura* no. 4, (1931), July/August, 5 Kurt Meyer was a German architect who was influential in the 1935 designs for Moscow.

Instead of outright demolition, it would be necessary to integrate the socialist buildings like crèches, workers clubs, dining halls into the fabric of the preexisting city. Take for example, Mel'nikov's and Golosov's workers' clubs; they adjoined factories, fulfilling the mission to integrate workers' life with access to leisure and education. Nikolai Miljutin, advocated as did the Central Committee, "Workers' houses should be located near factories and green zones and parks should be laid out together with cinemas, kindergartens, theaters, and so on."[278] This crucial point is almost never discussed in publications that neglect to acknowledge the sensitivity of the city planners to a socialist agenda and to workers' lives. Golosov's club and Mel'nikov's clubs are close to the factory that served the workers. It was not an incoherent or capital-driven gesture, like a pub might be, nor was the factory and work the sole consideration. In fact, as Meyer pointed out, an important decision was reached to forbid the construction of new factories/plants within city limits.[279]

Proximity to work was essential but not at the cost of population congestion and unhealthy air. In the 1929 issue of *Sovetskaia Arhitektura,* architects and theorists advocated that Moscow be built with hygiene in mind, considering such environmental aspects as meteorological conditions, the angle of the sun rays as they fall to the ground, direction of the wind, atmospheric pressure, sediments, formation of fogs, and an

[278] Meyer, "Gradstroitestva Moskvye,"1. Also see E.F. Milinis, "Problema rabochevo klyba" in *SA* 3, (1929): 112-113.

[279] Meyer, "Gradstroitestva Moskvye ,"5.

awareness of harmful gases, noises and contamination.[280] Meyer also provided diagrams showing the congestion of the trams in the center according to morning and night (fig. 33) and the congestion in the center caused by stores (fig. 34). Perhaps more interesting than the article itself is the editor's note at the bottom of the article, stating that the author, Meyer, "completely ignored the problem of reconstructing *byt* or way of life."[281] The editorial critique seems pointless, failing to elaborate how Meyer ignored *byt*. But that was the nature of many of the debates between the architectural groups—a level at their competitors' failure to grasp Marxism or Leninism.

Neglecting to acknowledge a building's location in context is to miss an important step towards socializing Moscow and the sensitivity of the architects to larger needs of the city, both ideological and physical. A rather poetic take on the role of the architect comes from the editorial board of the journal *Arhitektura* (architecture):

> The task of an architect is to create a resonating ensemble of a true modern life, feel its rhythm, its landscape, to understand the sky, divided by the wires, the street dissected by the sharp silhouette of a bridge or a factory; the diminishing perspective caused by the movement of motors, to understand simple everyday life of today, and find for it a fitting reflection—is our task. [282]

[280] Meyer, "Gradstroitestva Moskvye ," 8. One sees an affinity with Le Corbusier, who took a similar interest to "hygiene." He is also featured in the same issue.

[281] Editor's note on page 10 of Kurt Meyer's "Gradstroitestva Moskvye" in *Sovetskaia Arhitektura.*

[282] *Arhitektura*, "From the editorial board" (ed. Vesnin) no. 1-2 (1923). Page unknown

Even when Stalin assigned Kaganovich to Arkhplan the task of city planning, pragmatic and socialist issues were still very much considered. It has been a convenient generalization that Stalin's takeover of culture in 1932 led to a whitewashing hegemony.[283] As Udovichki-Selb has rightly argued, one should not expect a clean break in 1932, noting that cultural history was far more diverse and contested than what has been upheld in previous scholarship of Soviet architecture and culture.[284]

Consider the discourse below from Kaganovich and Miljutin, in 1931, followed by Kaganovich's speech in 1934, as an affirmation of the dynamic nature of the debates on city planning. Miljutin, writing in 1931 for *Sovetskaia Arhitektura* complains about the current state of city planning:

> There are serious problems in public transportation, lack of discipline among the workers in the public utilities services, deterioration of utility services in housing blocks and decline in the living conditions of the working-class dwellers. There is a lack of plans for roads and the underground, unsanitary conditions of working class districts proves the bad quality of work on the city by the public service department. The working population of Moscow grew up to 1.5 million, it is

[283] According to George R. Collins introduction to *Sotsgorod* and many others, 1932 marked the end of architectural Modernism when "nearly every architect had abandoned and even condemned his earlier. Modernism," 28. Though judging by the building program, modernist buildings continued to be built after 1932.

[284] See Udovichki-Selb's discussion on pages: 40-42, particularly footnote 49 of "The Evolution of Soviet Architectural Culture in the First Decade of Stalin's `Perestroika'." Kaganovich, and by extension Stalin, were keen to hold CIAM (Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne) in Moscow as late as 1935, confirming that the Soviets were not ready to abandon their participation in the Modern Movement.

really a proletariat center and should be taken into consideration when creating a plan for city development.[285]

Kaganovich's assessment of the building of Moscow is equally sober. Despite the building of 5,000 new homes or 2 million square meters of space and housing nearly half a million people, the housing shortage has not disappeared. [286] Throughout the session, Kaganovich was critical of wasteful building and bureaucratic incompetence which failed to maintain buildings; he noted various anecdotal accounts from dwellers whose apartments have cracks or tilting windows. He lamented the shortages of building materials and cited that 62% of homes in Moscow are built out of wood, and only 30% are stone, with far too many single and two-story homes taking up space. Not only is the city council burdened with building new homes; maintaining older homes was just as pressing, he argued.

Among the issues that Kaganovich raised was the profligate spending on construction, costing 160 rubles per square meter, instead of the 140 rubles allotted. Kaganovich encouraged research into new building materials, especially since there are significant shortages of brick and not enough concrete and steel. After 1932, many of the same problems in housing continued to plague city planners, nor were the solution any

[285] Nikolai Miljutin, "Zadachi planerovki Moskvye" (Question on the Plans for Moscow) in *Sovetskaia Arhitektura* July-August, No. 4, (1931): 1.

[286] Kaganovich, (1931): 16-17.

clearer. Kaganovich lamented, "At present we have no clearly worked out directions in architecture."[287]

In his speech to factory workers in 1934, Kaganovich acknowledged the noise of the trams, the disruption of the neighborhoods where the metro was being built, the dirty nature of passageways. Like Haussmann, Kaganovich envisioned reducing the clutter of small buildings for larger arterial streets and linking them together. He urged that this change had to happen now, not in five to six years as then it would be too late and too expensive to deal with the delay. Streets had to be enlarged, even if that meant taking down homes.[288] Otherwise, "If we don't have a plan for the city, we will build such boxes, which will be ashamed to look at in a few years. It will come that sometimes homes will be built where a road must come through, or there needs to be a city square, of which there are insufficient amounts in Moscow." [289] Kaganovich continued:

> We have already taken on these challenges. Of course we understand that the most difficult of the plan is still ahead. We know that we need to recalculate the tempo of the general reconstruction of Moscow in realistic terms. To accomplish our general plan of Moscow will cost a considerable amount of resources, we

[287] Anderson "The Future of History: The Cultural Politics of Soviet Architecture, 1928-41," 76. Anderson cites: L. M. Kaganovich, "Summary of a Speech by Comrade Kaganovich at a Meeting of Moscow Communist Architects," 1 September 1933. RGASPI, f. 81. op. 3, d. 182,1. 70.

[288] Speech given by Kaganovich to factory workers. L.M. Kaganovich, "O stroitel'stve Metropolitena I plane goroda Moskvy" Mosvka : Isdanie Gazeti *Ydarnik Metrostroya,* (1934), 25.

[289] Kaganovich, (1934), 20.

> cannot fantasize that it will take only one to two years. Moscow took 800 years to build.[290]

The overall tone of Kaganovich's speech is pragmatic, if not disillusioned. He made note of the current problems plaguing the city, including the trams that not only delayed traffic, but also added considerable noise. He actually celebrated the removal of the tram in the Arbat section, stating, "We need to note that the street won a lot—reduction of traffic pressure fell considerably and even the street took on a new face."[291]

Additionally, Kaganovich stressed the necessity of cleaning up the streets and liquidating anything unsanitary, as well as repairing old homes. He also acknowledged that while building the metro is useful, so is remembering to address the current issues of communal living, including providing heat to residents. "In reality," he stated, "these are not insignificant things, but are what cause the mood of life today." [292]The metro, he admited, has caused considerable disruptions to streets. Judging by many of the photos of 1930s Moscow, streets are dug up, appearing like mass graves. We must envisage a city undergoing revitalization and the ongoing construction of streets, tramway lines, underground subway, demolition of churches and electrification as a constant presence for Moscow inhabitants. Apart from the disruptive aspects of city planning, planting trees was also of significant importance. The greening of the city had remained a goal to

[290] Kaganovich, (1934), 25.

[291] Kaganovich, (1934), 26. His comment should not be taken without consideration that the metro would absorb whatever insufficiency was caused by the removal of the tram.

[292] Kaganovich , (1934), 26.

the point that Kaganovich boasts that 717,000 trees have been planted, as well as three million bushes. The Green City plan, one could say, was still circulating as a viable influence well into the late 1930s and beyond.

In conclusion, in 1918, the plans for transforming Moscow were as nascent as the experiment with communism. The sobriety resulting from the revolution, the civil war and Word War I forced a critical evaluation of the conditions of life, the original plans for the future and what was feasible for the time being. Conceptions of communism varied and changed during the NEP years and into the Five-Year-Plans continuing as negotiations, for better or worse with the material conditions. Conceptions of Modernism were equally ambiguous and determined by material reality. The architects and artists ultimately did not know what proletarian architecture should look like; and the proletarians did not either.

CHAPTER THREE

The Material Evidence

The majority of buildings built in the 1920s and 1930 were brick, four or five story apartments, not steel and glass skyscrapers of New York.[293] Building permits in those years show kindergartens, apartment buildings, dining halls and worker clubs as the common building type.[294] If we discount the ordinary houses, schools and cafeterias that were built in the 1920s and 1930s, highly-public commissions were rare. Economics were indeed a factor and expedience for housing meant that majority of the buildings built throughout the city were apartments. It was also less expensive to repurpose buildings than to demolish them and start from scratch.

When funds were available for prestigious projects, Soviet architects were engaged in competitions open to international architects for these government commissions. It is important to keep in mind that despite the modernist desire for simple forms with contemporary materials, this realization is not necessarily inexpensive. When there is no concrete and steel, wood and brick are more viable and less expensive

[293] See E. D. Simon's *Moscow in the Making* (1937) for a sobering account of the housing situation in Moscow vis a vis that of London. Even the exemplary apartment buildings were quickly slapped together. The efforts to address the housing shortage are, however, exemplified by the bricklayers who had to warm their hands and the mortar during winter construction.

[294] Main Moscow Archive branch: Archive of utilities and planning departments of Moscow, numerous cases from 1927-29.

options.[295] Furthermore, the limited knowledge of building with modern materials also resulted in fewer "Modern" buildings built.

Outside of the presence of the pre-revolutionary architects, who never really disappeared but merely re-invented themselves, the two most vocal and productive groups in the 1920s and 1930s were OSA and ASNOVA.[296] Frederick Starr offers this succinct description of ASNOVA and OSA and the lines they drew:

> ASNOVA members searched for unique and expressive forms, OSA for archetypes suitable for mass production; ASNOA blithely passed over technical problems of construction, OSA was infatuated with them; ASNOVA dreamt of a science of art, OSA of a science of craft; ASNOVA prided itself on its aesthetic insights, OSA's journal *SA* all but apologized when it used the language of aesthetics. And, where ASNOVA's enthusiasm for expressive forms at the expense of practicality linked it politically with the extreme left, the OSA passion for bald and mechanistic functionalism left the group open to criticism as being rightist, notwithstanding its own frequently repeated claims to being the only truly Marxist architectural association in Russia.[297]

[295] Mel'niko demonstrates with his *Makhorka Exhibition Pavilion* (1923) at the Agricultural Exhibition that modern does not have to be defined by steel, glass and concrete. The shortage of modern building material is evidenced by Lenin's first mausoleum which was built out of wood (1924).

[296] They shared their origins at INKhUK.

[297] Starr, *Mel'nikov Solo Architect in Mass Society*, 115.

ASNOVA had three and a half dozen members, though my study is limited to Ladovskii and Mel'nikov (Mel'nikov was never formally a member but was clearly ideologically aligned). I regret that little work is published on ASNOVA as a group and their only publication provides a very basic outline of the group's ideas instead of a thorough accounting. If anything, it is Lissitzky's *Russia: An Architecture for World Revolution* that is perhaps the best source of ASNOVA's ideological position.

Both OSA and ASNOVA members saw themselves as immersed in the contemporary situation, and addressing how to best represent it with architectural form. Ginzburg summarized their ideas thusly:

> Undoubtedly there is nothing accidental in modern art's striving for an austere an austere and ascetic language of constructive forms, just as there is nothing accidental about the epithets that the various artistic groups willingly assign themselves. `Rationalism,' `Constructivism,' and all such nicknames are only outward representations of a striving for modernity.[298]

Mel'nikov remembers that ASNOVA architects saw themselves as "new" architects and OSA architects saw themselves as "contemporary." Although Starr frames the two organizations as nearly opposites, Ginzburg suggested that the distinctions between them are rather blurry.

[298] Ginzburg, *Style and Epoch*, 102.

OSA

OSA was formed in 1925 by the Vesnin brothers (Alexandr, Leonid and Viktor), who were active before the revolution and Ginzburg, who likewise, had training in classical architecture during his studies in Italy. Members included Golosov brothers, Mikhail Barsch, Andrei Burov, to name a few, and it was by far the more influential association of architects in the 1920s and early 1930s. OSA had a fair amount of competition with the variety of architectural groups and organizations, but it was their publication *Sovremennaia Arhitektura* (Contemporary Architecture) made OSA rise to prominence above the grueling competition.[299]

Aleksander Vesnin, and his brothers had prolific careers as architects prior to the revolution and managed to be numbered among the small handful of the leading practitioners of modernist architecture in Moscow. The Vesnins were soon associated with *LEF* (Left Front of the Arts). *LEF*, published from 1923 to 1925, advocated for art that could influence the psychology of the worker.[300] This view was clearly summarized by Aleksander at INKhUK institute in 1922. He argued that art had to match the dynamic realities of modernity and was to be "an active force organizing man's consciousness and provoking him into vigorous activity."[301] He further added, "The

[299] Senkevich , *Trends in Soviet Architectural Thought, 1917-32: The Growth and Decline of the Constructivist and Rationalist Movements,* 215. Footnote 3.

[300] *Style and Epoch*, see footnote 67, 33.

[301] Aleksander is quoted in Ginzburg's *Style and Epoch,* 31. See also "Kredo (1922)" in *Mastera Sovetskoi arkhiterktury ob arhetekture."* M.G. Harkhin and Iu. S. Iaralov. Vol 2. (Moscow, Iskusstvo: 1975).

modern artist must create objects that are equal to them in power, intensity, and potential in the context of their psychophysiological impact as an organizing element in man's consciousness." [302] Eventually, the Vesnins came to be associated with OSA. Although OSA was not primarily concerned with psychology, it was nonetheless aware of architecture's capability to produce a psychological experience within the city dweller.

Boris Velikovskii, Barsch, Vladimirov, *Gostorg* (1927). *"The sun glimmers on the windows of Gostorg" (Sol'nizami okon sciaet Gostorg)*—Mayakovskii.[303]

Boris Velikovskii, was the Head Architect for *Gostorg* (fig. 35). Not much is written about him in the Constructivist canon due to his early death in 1937. Although he was a formal member of OSA, his career and architectural style spans the popular styles before and after the revolution. He and Leonid Vesnin are responsible for the neo-classical *Gribov House* built in 1910 and the *Kuznetsov Apartment* built in the Style Moderne in 1910 along with A.N. Milukov. Despite the change in style, there is a marked precision and clarity to Velikovskii's work prior to the revolution which still manifests itself during his Constructivist phase.[304]

When we turn the corner from the large, arterial Sadovaia, onto a triangular block formed by Miassnitskaia, and Miassnitskii Proezd, Miassnitskaja 47 looks onto an oddly

[302] Ginsburg quotes Aleksander in *Style and Epoch*, 31.

[303] Maykovsky's poem "Автобусом по Москве" "*Avtobusum po Moskve."* "Солнцами окон сияет Госторг" (*Gostorg's* windows glare/reflect the sun). Likewise, one finds documentary footages of driving through Manhattan in 1928.

[304] William Craft Brumfield, *The Origins of Modernism in Russian Architecture* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1991), 97.

shaped plaza (Miassnitskaia Plaza). The map does not thoroughly indicate the proximity of the street nor the open space that the junction implies. Miassnitskii Proezd was laid down in the 1830's in the direction of *Krasnye Vorota* (Red Gates). The other direction of the square is made monumental by #48, a large red brick building built in 1895.[305]

The scale of the buildings on Miassnitskaia is unpredictable. Bracing the corner of Sadovaia and Miassnitskaia is a pre-revolutionary building, built in 1839. The building belonged to a merchant family until the revolution, when it became the State Institute for Musical Science. Like many buildings of that era, it is polychrome and long enough to buttress *Gostorg*. While *Gostorg* has a certain horizontal weight, it looms in height over Sadovaia 22 and Miassnitskaia like a "glass honeycomb." The two flanking buildings, both two-storied, also frame *Gostorg* nearly symmetrically. The symmetry on the street is carried through to the symmetry within *Gostorg*, implying sensitivity to the site.

The second building from *Gostorg* is one of the exemplary buildings of the classical revival, built in 1790. For a time, the building was a school for the arts. It was noted for an inclusive, democratic admittance program, which allowed even talented peasants to apply. *Gostorg*'s austerity or skeletal simplicity is contrasted by the buildings on the opposite side which are decorative and colorful. This point is never mentioned by architectural historians. Most of the modernist structures are devoid of color and stand in stark juxtaposition against the numerous polychromed buildings in Russian towns.

[305] Feodycek, *Moskva v koltse sadovih*, 207.

Alfred Barr described the colorful nature of Moscow: "The buildings, through disrepair, have a most delicate tone-pinks, greens, and pale yellows; much baroque, rococo, and '*drittes Rococo*.'"[306] A monosyllabic gray, so common to modernist buildings, would certainly stand out against the gaiety of its neighbors.

Since *Gostorg* serves as one of the earliest and recognizable modernist structures, it received due appreciation. It was photographed by Rodchenko and included in Lissitzky's writing and in Le Corbusier's. *SA* featured it in their 1927 issue along with Velikovskii's discussion of his design. The poet Mayakovskii cited *Gostorg* for its sun-reflective windows.[307]

Over its lifetime, *Gostorg*, the Soviet Ministry of Trade, employed several thousand employees and operated numerous offices. The new headquarters planned for prestigious Miassnitskaia Ulitsa had to signal the advances made by Soviet technology. Naturally, the design would have to incorporate new materials and technology. Velikovskii's plans included steel and concrete with many windows and a ground floor to display cars and tractors. Ironically, though many modernist theorists advocated that the lack of decorative additions meant efficiency and economy, the materials used for *Gostorg* were anything but cheap and plentiful. With the introduction of the New Economic Policy (1921-1928) financial hardships eased. State trading companies that had access to hard currency, funded notable examples like *Gostorg*. The glass and steel

[306] Barr, "Russian Diary 1927-28," 11.

[307] Fedocuyk, *Moskva v koltse sadovih*, 205.

building was among the first to use these modern materials. It is akin to importing Brazilian hardwoods to the US. *SA*'s 1927 feature on it noted the expensive nature of the materials and the compromises that had to be made.[308] Consequently building projects, including *Gostorg*, would be stopped and resources directed to dire needs. [309] As Hans Meyer remembered,

> We even abandon buildings that have been started and whose foundations have been finished, simply because waste of materials has to be avoided at all costs. An example of this is the building of *Tzentrosoyuz* (designed by Le Corbusier). At the moment we lack the capability to carry out such projects. They are beyond the scope of the present Five-Year Plan. We abandon such unfinished projects, like a cake half-eaten, so we can have our daily bread.[310]

Indeed documents submitted for the file on *Gostorg* include an official letter urging Velikovskii to use red bricks sparingly as they are needed for other building projects.[311] Even after construction began, a letter from Morozov, the main architect for the city of Moscow, requests immediate cessation of work as CMO issues a decree to stop all the building projects except the central telegraph. Velikovskii appeals for permission to continue work on the building, followed by a letter written to the Moscow Prime Minster

[308] B.M Velikovskii, "Hronika stroitestva, 1925-6-7 Dom Gostorga" *SA* no. 1 (1927): 28-32. Most of the article is a consideration of the engineering, heating and cooling.

[309] MMA: UPD, see *Gostorg* archive and their plea to continue building despite the building halt.

[310] In Lissitzky's *Russia: An Architecture for World Revolution*, 216.

[311] Main Moscow Archive, Fond 2, Opis 1, delo 3657, page 14. This request makes Mel'nikov's personal home all the more unique, considering the shortages of red bricks.

by the chair of VSSR that requests for work to continue on *Gostorg*. Over the course of several months, letters requesting the cessation of work would be sent, followed by an appeal from Velikovskii and Gostorg's officials to resume work.

The file on *Gostorg* is a lengthy one and demonstrates the particular sensitivity of the city's main architect (Morozov) and the city's main engineer (P. A. Mamatov) had to the building materials and to the site itself.[312] For example, the head engineer instructs Velikovskii to keep access to the tram and sidewalks as they are. Velikovskii's initial competition design for *Gostorg* had twelve stories; however after concerns were raised from Moscow's main engineer, the tower was reduced to six stories. At the time, regulations did not permit anything above six stories within the city center, curtailing several grand plans.

Various letters, forms and decrees are issued over the course of the construction, showing a constant dialogue between the city and the architect, beginning with the request to demolish a two story wood house for the construction of *Gostorg*. Among the letters, a few are complaints. Veizen, a regional architect complains that work on *Gostorg* has been going on without permission. An inspector writes that there is danger to workers and to the ground. *Gostorg* responds and "places all trust to architect" on October 16, 1925. But they soon receive a draft to the board of chairs from Morozov

[312] P.A. Mamatov was particular concerned with aesthetics as demonstrated by his Russian forward to Camillo Sitte's *City Planning According to Artistic Principles* (1889) translated into Russian in 1925. In the forward, Mamatov laments the destruction of monuments of art and antiquity, seeing their removal as altering the intrinsic beauty of the city [Moscow]. This "haphazard" destruction, he believes, will remain uncorrected for years. The entire forward is reprinted in George R. Collins, Camillo Sitte, Christiane Crasemann Collins, *Camillo Sitte: The Birth of Modern City Planning* (Mineola: Dover Publications Inc., 1986), 76-78.

(city architect) that the project does not meet agreed upon conditions. He states that the size of *Gostorg* was increased from 67,987 to 95,000 cubic meters and it must be changed back. It must not exceed the height of 6 floors; and the current 23 meters plan does not meet the code.[313] In response, the architect attaches a new cross plan and lowers the height of the tower, and requests permission to continue. His plan also includes an aerial view, showing bushes and adjoining buildings. Velikovskii also provides an explanatory note to the main engineer stating that "the original office of *Gostorg* was not suitable for office work, not to mention the distance of the offices from the board of directors. The choice of the location is the main technical artery which connects administrative, industrial center of Moscow with all important railway stations fully meets the goals set up by Gostorg." He then provides a rationale for the size of the building, noting that *Gostorg* is located on the square crisscrossing May 1 Street (recently changed from Miassnitskaia) and Kozlovky alley. The width of the square, he points out is 25 sazhen (1 sazhen equals seven feet), and the height to the building is less than the width of the square, thus, it does not exceed regulations. Velikovskii then makes a request to build the tower for the purpose of advertising.[314] His request is challenged by the engineer who appeals to Mossovet[315] to not allow raising the height of *Gostorg*, despite *Gostorg's* acquisition of adjoining building #49. Mamatov argues that the middle

[313] Main Moscow Archive, 13, December 24, 1925. Page 13 is a draft, page 14 is the typed official letter.

[314] Main Moscow Archive, 24. Nov. 13, 1925.

[315] In 1933 Aleksander and Viktor Vesnin joined the architectural arm of Mossovet. Mel'nikov had also worked for Mossovet in the 1930s.

section should not be erected or elevated as it would darken the neighboring homes. He also adds that construction of such a tall building would create unwanted traffic jams.[316]

Despite Velikovskii's efforts to explain and validate his plans, the main engineer requests an immediate stop to construction. In addition, in the same month, minutes taken from a consulting commission, Sanitary Supervision, state that the project violates the decision of Mossovet, adding, "construction will harm the neighboring homes, view will be obstructed, and it will cause more damage to transportation by overloading Miassnitskaia and its two tram lines." The commission stresses the inevitable obstruction of a view by *Gostorg*.[317]

The struggle between the city and Velikovskii continued and numerous stop work orders were issued followed by pleas to resume work. Once the building is finally completed it undergoes various analyses. The analyses note cracks in the façade, construction strain, soil analysis, and review the effects the "glass walls" have on the worker's ability to work and on their health. A general questionnaire is filled out asking: which trams go by, other construction buildings, and the number of trees.[318] Finally, the engineer insists that there be no windows on adjoining building and that the windows on *Gostorg* must be covered as they overlook adjoining houses.[319] The file on *Gostorg* is a

[316] Main Moscow Archive, December 1925 Fond 2, Opis 1, delo 3657, 44.

[317] Main Moscow Archive, Gostorg File, p. 34 Nov. 1925.

[318] P. A. Mamatov's interest in trees may have come from his reading of Camillo Sitte's *City Planning According to Artistic Principles* wherein Sitte's considers bushes and trees as part of town planning.

[319] Main Moscow Archive, 122-169.

worthy example of the sensitivity of the citizens, the building commission and the architect to serve the needs of the commission while at the same time adhering to the economic hardships. Equally important was the sensitivity to the people who work and live on the street.

Grigorii and Mikhail Barkhin: *Izvestiia Editorial* (1925-1927)

Just off the bustling Tverskaia street there is a prominent square, now known as Pushkin square. There stands what was once the headquarters of *Izvestiia*, one of the leading newspapers of the Soviet period (fig. 36). The location for *Izvestiia* is a prominent one. It is the largest and most important square, intersecting with Tverskaia. Tverskaia, renamed Gorky Street, is frequently mentioned in Walter Benjamin's diary of Moscow, shown in Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* and was the site of a banner that read "Let's turn Moscow into the best city in the world through its architecture and modern conveniences."[320] Originally the gates of the "White city" *Belyi Gorod* stood here, and the spot was originally named "Tverskiie Vorota." Afterwards, it assumed the name of "Passion Square" in honor of the monastery *Passion of Christ* (1654) (fig. 37). In 1770, the gate and the walls of the "White City" were demolished, creating the square that came to be known as Pushkin square.[321] Its location was significant for the technological innovations. In 1899, the first city tramline was placed

[320] In Paperny's, *Architecture in the Age of Stalin: Culture Two*, 77.

[321] The square was renamed in 1931 and the monastery was dismantled in 1937. For a longer discussion of the square see: *Pushkinskaya strastnaya ploschad i strasnoi monastir'* (Pushkin Passion Square and Passion Monastery) (Moskva: Mgo voopik, 2008), 43.

there and in 1907, the first taxi parking lot. It was also the site of the first power lines of a newspaper—started atop *Izevstiia*. [322] After the revolution, the monastery became a prop for billboards, though one can still see its original glory in several of the photos (fig. 38). Over the course of several years, and visible in the series of photographs, the square has undergone significant reconstruction, demolition and disruptions during and after the construction of *Izvestiia* (fig. 39).

Grigorii Barkhin, the architect of *Izvestiia*, was trained in the classical tradition, like many other architects who gained prominence during the 1920s and 1930s. He attended the Imperial Academy of Arts, the oldest architectural academy in St. Petersburg, with, "A Necropolis near a Metropolis" for his final project. Ironically, his thesis would foreshadow the work he would take on when he moved to Moscow and designed *Izvestiia*. His modern-looking *Izvestiia* sits among many relics on Pushkin Square.

Izvestiia was built in the same time period as *Gostorg* and shares many of the same architectural traits. Between *Gostorg* and *Izvestiia*, Barkhin's design is more expressive, particularly with his use of rounded windows. The horizontal massing of the left corner creates a dynamic tension. Izvestiia, like Gostorg was prohibited from building its planned twelve-story tower, so what the viewer saw and sees today is significantly different from the original design. Comparing the original design, which also

[322] Fyodicin, *Moskva v koltzeh sadovih*, 294.

incorporates the adjoining building, *Izvestiia* would have towered even more so over its two neighbors (fig. 40).

If we look at its position in the square today or how it once faced the monastery and the adjoining buildings, it is impossible to deny that a communication between these buildings is taking place. And here, quite literally, a building is made to speak. The monastery, while useless for its original function becomes the prop to communicate the party's message.[323] We must also consider how *Izvestiia* announces itself as the new order by scale and the lack of bourgeois décor which dates its neighbors, something that Barkhin was conscious of, even in the first design (fig. 41).[324]

Vesnin Brothers, *Zil Palace of Culture* (1928-1937)

Outside the center of Moscow, in an area known as the Proletarian region, apartment blocks and factories determine the area. To find *Zil Palace of Culture*, one must walk along a lengthy sidewalk with apartment buildings to one's right and a green zone on the left. The setting for the palace of culture is romantic, if one turns a blind eye to the opposite side of the street with its apartment complexes. The palace in all its grandiosity does not face the pedestrian from the street. Its monumentality only becomes apparent when one turns the corner.

[323] Dialogue between the two national papers: *Pravda* and *Izvestiia,* here the dialogue is a friendly one.

[324] A building of prophecy stands side by side with buildings of memory—for more on prophecy and memory see Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter's *Collage City*.

It is a remarkable site, far from the city center within the Danilovsky proletarian neighborhood, in the southern part of Moscow. In the 19th century, privately owned plants and factories occupied the region. In 1379, one of the most significant cathedrals *Uspenia Bogoroditsa* was built in the area. Prior to the revolution, there were five other churches, a hospital and a bell tower—a landmark of Moscow. The Simeonov Monastery named after Simeonov, was founded in 1370 on land granted by a nobleman. The monastery was under royal protection and several aristocrats provided gold and silver for the upkeep and support of the monastery and its surrounding buildings. The monastery was enclosed by hardy brick walls, with three entry gates and five towers. Within its gates was a cemetery for the aristocracy, monks, and notable Russian figures.

After the Revolution, in 1923, the monastery was transformed into a museum. When Walter Benjamin visited Moscow in 1927, he remarked, "The churches are almost mute. The city is as good as free of the chimes that on Sundays spread such deep melancholy over our cities. But there is still perhaps not a single spot in Moscow from which at least *one* church is not visible."[325] A few churches continued to provide religious services until the last of them closed in 1929. When the Semenov Monastery closed, the cemetery was replaced with a park and only three bodies from the original cemetery were transferred to Novodevich'e cemetery. [326]

[325] Benjamin, "Moscow," 126.

[326] Fedocyuk, *Moskva v koltse sadovih* , 613-614.

In 1929, the "center of obscurity" was selected as a site by a committee, comprised of the several factories in the Proletarskaia region.[327] By 1932, the land was officially designated for the construction of a workers' club named after Zil. A competition was initially held for the winning design and architect, but all the submitted plans were deemed unworthy for one reason or another and the commission was essential given over to the Vesnin brothers (who did not participate in the competition). The brothers worked in cooperation with the workers who would use the club when completed. The workers also donated labor to clear the site and worked under the slogan, "Let us build the home of our culture on the site of the home of obscurity."[328] The Vesnins and the workers must have known they were disrupting sacred ground, so to speak.

Vesnins' *Zil Palace of Culture*, originally knowns as *Likachev Palace of Culture* is an extensive gray building was built to serve the workers of the Likachev automobile factory (fig. 42). It is spatially spread out and once the court is entered, it appears more like a city block than a discrete building. The club was intended to operate on fluid spaces, as Vesnins described, "We have applied this principle of fluid space in the Palace of Culture. …In the theater lobby is a large volume that joins the ground floor with the first floor. We wanted people to be able to really breathe freely and easily in that

[327] Aleksander V. Anisimov, *Architectural Guide to Moscow*, (Rotterdam Uitgeverij 010 Publishers, 1993), 139.

[328] A. Chinyakov, "The Vesnin Brothers," 55.

lobby."[329] According to the 1931 model the Vesnin brothers designed, the complex was intended to be even larger, with a circular auditorium to be built on the site. Still, with its scaled down version, it held a 1000 seat auditorium, clubrooms, library, cafeteria, dancehall and even an astronomical observatory.

A striking feature about the ground plan for *Zil*, is the obvious Latin cross plan, complete with an apse and an exterior ambulatory (fig. 43). Anatolii Kopp fails to mention this direct influence stating that the Vesnins did not seek any architectural effect, apart from serving the functional needs of the workers.[330] A project sketch for a church at Balakovo in 1909 by Viktor and Aleksander Vesnin, surely, points to their intimate knowledge of church architecture (fig. 44).[331] To replace the various churches that were built on site, within the walls of a monastery whose perimeter walls were still visible with a cross plan, is very much an architectural effect, arguably a subtle one. Moreover, subconsciously reinforcing the cross plan, the worker who once may have attended services at one of the five churches or the cathedral, may have experienced another form of enlightenment as his/her body occupied the body of the palace of culture.

One of the monastery's towers and parts of the surrounding walls were never completely demolished and linger like Arcadian ruins alongside the modernist geometry. The red brick walls of the former monastery enclosure serve to contrast or compliment

[329] Magomedov, Vesnin, 173. Quote is taken from *Arhitekturnaia Gazeta,* March 3, (1936).

[330] Kopp, *Constructivist Architecture in the USSR*, 112.

[331] Sketch appeared in *Ezhegodnik Moskogovo arhitekturnovo obshechestva* in 1909. Sketch may be found in Brumfield's *The Origins of Modernism in Russian Architecture*, 111.

the palace and to the contemporary viewer the way the *Kaiser Wilhem Memorial Church* in Berlin serves to remind viewers of Berlin's complicated pasts (fig. 45). Sometimes the ongoing relationship between the past and the present is ideologically more powerful than simply removing antiquated structures.

Koetter and Rowe make the following suggestion to the postmodern architect and city planner:

> It might be judicious, in most cases, to allow and encourage the object to become digested in a prevalent texture or matrix. It is further suggested that neither object nor space fixation are, in themselves, any longer representative of valuable attitudes. The one may, indeed, characterize the 'new' city and the other the old; but, if these are situations which must be transcended rather than emulated, the situation to be hoped for should be recognized as one in which both buildings and spaces exist in an equality of sustained debate.[332]

Rowe and Koetter are correct; nevertheless, this does not require planning. It is always already in process with the fluctuation of experience and perception. During the 1930s when the Palace of Culture was completed, it appeared to have triumphed over the religious institution that once dominated cultural life, while today it stands as yet another relic of institutions that have lost value and meaning for post-communist Moscovites.

[332] Koetter and Rowe, *Collage City*, 83.

ASNOVA

Without the notable figures associated with ASNOVA, like Lissitzky, Mel'nikov and Ladovskii, it might have remained marginal. It produced one edition of its journal, and, if it were not for Mel'nikov, who was not a true member, their architectural output would be very limited. ASNOVA's key influence was the guidance it provided to VKhUTEMAS students and Mel'nikov. Ladovskii had been a professor at VKhUTEMAS and focused on "psychoanalytic methods" with his "psychotechnical laboratory." [333] These men still believed in "aesthetics" as a method for generating an emotional response. Mel'nikov described his method for the *Makhorka Pavilion* as such:

> I exhausted myself in the summoning roar of Nature, from somewhere remote and profound as if through a sort of thicket; self-supporting mechanics gave way by themselves, and the masses that reared up on the insignificant magnitude of the pavilion exalted Architecture through a new language, the language of Expression.[334]

[333] Indeed, several Russia Marxists were interested in Freud's ideas. For a reconciliation of Freud and Marxism see John Fizer's "The Problem of the Unconscious in the Creative Process as Treated by Soviet Aesthetics," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, (Summer 1963): 399-406. Also Slavoj Žižek's first chapter "How did Marx Invent the Symptom?" in his *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, (London: Verso, 1989). See also Trotsky, *Literature and Revolution*, 220. For a more recent treatment of psychoanalysis in Russia after the revolution, see Vronskaya's "The Productive Unconscious: Architecture, Experimental Psychology and the Techniques of Subjectivity in Soviet Russia, 1919-1935."

[334] Starr, *Mel'nikov Solo Architect in Mass Society*, 67. Quote taken from Mel'nikov's "*Arhitektura moei zhizni*," 27.

Mel'nikov's description certainly evokes German Romanticism, though Starr associated the "swirling motion" of his *Sukharevka Market Pavilion* with Italian Futurism.[335] Regardless of its aesthetic roots, an aerial photo of the pavilion, taken by Aleksander Rodchenko in 1924, shows a forest of open stalls with staggered roofs. The perspective in the photograph renders them as stylized structures that one would see in icon paintings (fig. 46).[336]

Konstantin Mel'niko, *Kauchuk Worker Club* (1927-29)

Mel'nikov who did not officially belong to any of the prominent architectural groups was fortunate enough to have ties to the old architectural society and Moscow's City Council, including serving for Mossovet (Moscow's city hall). Mel'nikov has been the subject of various studies and monographs for good reason, but I will address only a few of his designs here. His artistic output is commendable, but scholars almost never cite the rational planning of his designs. He was privileged enough to have several commissions throughout the city of Moscow from various worker unions, not to mention the funds and rights to build a private house on the street parallel to Arbat.[337] The design

[335] Starr, *Mel'nikov Solo Architect in Mass Society*, 67. *Vechernaia Moskva*, no. 227 (1924): 2.

[336] Starr states that the sloping roofs were deliberately designed to evoke medieval icon paintings. No citation is given for this deduction. See pages 68-69.

[337] Starr, *Mel'nikov Solo Architect in a Mass Society*, 117. Mel'nikov's house is located on Krivoarbatskii Pereulok in Moscow. Private home ownership was still permissible under certain circumstances though a house of this size and location is unique. The elite members of Stalin's inner circles were given apartments. To own a house of this size built in this section of town was rare and gives us a glimpse of the privilege that Mel'nikov must have enjoyed. According to Ernst May, families were permitted to keep private dwellings if they did not exceed 10,000 rubles. According to John N. Hazard's *Soviet Housing Law*, (New Haven, 1939), 2-7, after NEP, many dwellings were denationalized and single-dwelling were more regular than communal homes. See Starr's *Mel'nikov Solo Architect in a Mass Society*, footnote 24, 119. Mel'nikov's private house raises interesting questions. According to one critic writing in 1920s,

for his cylindrical home and the nature of building private homes in a socialist state was debated in several issues of *Stroitel'stvo Moskvy*, including both negative and positive reviews.[338] Mel'nikov's own house was atypical compared to his other designs. Firstly, it was a single family dwelling, located just off Arbat, unlike his worker's clubs and garages that tended to be built in the proletarian neighborhoods.

Mel'nikov, was a unique case in Russia's post-revolutionary history. Unlike many of his peers, he was given several commissions based on his popularity, instead of having to compete for commissions the way other architects were obliged to do. He was a favorite among the workers, who wanted him to build workers' clubs. His workers' clubs in particular are jarring, and yet at the same time they are utterly functional in their proximity to the factories that they serve and the nearby housing.[339]

Kauchuk, similar to many modernist structures of its day, utilizes the corner position facing several streets at once, which Mel'nikov recognized (fig. 16). If one looks at an aerial view, the triangular shape of the section of Devich'e Pole and the *Kauchuk* on the opposite triangular tip of a triangular block, they appear like two points

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Mel'nikov's house brought up various question including if it was some formalist, unprincipled experiment, a political or social statement, or a solitary and personal statement of a single architect? Starr, *Mel'nikov Solo Architect in a Mass Society*, 119.

[338] See *Stroitel'stvo Moskvy,* no. 10, (1929): 18, 19, 20. Also in issue, no. 5 (1929).

[339] Mel'nikov's writing in October of 1969 said about his work on garages, "My system, like a psychological…has broken all existing norms." "Моя система, как психологический натиск, нарушила все существовавшие нормы, сузив отверстие расходования средств и времени на пользование автотранспортом." Architect New "Коммуна и человек. Жилые дома и клубы" see: http://www.architectnew.ru/anps-1484-6.html, 6.

meeting at the top. In addition, the angularity of the street is made soft by the curvature of the club which Mel'nikov was also aware of: "The wall of the *Kauchuk* Factory Club curves round in an open area at the corner of the Devich'e Pole, on Pljushikha."[340]

The club stands across from the 19th-century *Church of Archangel Michael* (fig. 47). One can see it peering in the background of the photo. The church was intended to serve the campus hospital and was built with the personal funds of an obstetrician, by the architect M.I. Nikiforov (another source states, A. Meisner). In 1922, the church was looted, like many churches, and closed in 1931. The area was once the site of a convent—hence the name Virgin Field. Eventually, hospitals clinics, orphanages, and schools were built on site, no doubt due to the connections of convents that ministered to the sick and poor. Most of the homes that surrounded *Kauchuk* had been made out of wood, "giving them a rustic appearance"[341] The club was built out of brick, then plastered in a pachyderm gray. One can imagine that the rounded false cement façade would have appeared as a stark contrast to the stately wooden estates.[342] It is important to remember that the homes of the well-to-do were built out of wood; *Pogodinskaya Izba* (1850s) is a good reminder of this (fig. 1). It too stands on Devich'e Pole. The gardens of the former estate were turned into a park. The pastoral setting and the surrounding wooden homes, gave *Kauchuk* an even more modern appearance. Eventually, the area was built up with

[340] Mario Fosso, Otakar Máchel and Maurizio Meriggi eds., *Konstantin S. Mel'nikov and the Construction of Moscow* (Skira: Milano: 2000), 182.

[341] *Konstantin S. Mel'nikov and the Construction of Moscow*, 182.

[342] Main Moscow Archives files indicate that there was a request for a wooden building to be taken down for the construction of *Kauchuk*.

worker apartments. The land was also plentiful here, making construction of apartments and club for workers like *Usachevka* and *Kauchuk* more feasible.

As a neighborhood club, it had to be a functional alternative for the workers of the *Kauchuk* factory. As Mel'nikov had argued, "A club—is not a strict temple to some god. We need to accomplish the kind of reality where the worker is not forced to attend, but runs to it on his own accord, past his house and the pub. The club must, if it succeeds, show how a new life is to be built."[343] Such ambitious plans and social ideological prescriptions may explain the dependence of the club, which included auditorium type theaters. *Kauchuk's* theater seated 700. The club hosted a sports hall and thirteen other rooms for various club events and activities.

Workers' clubs or palaces, as they would be called, began cropping up as early as 1918 and were housed in nationalized mansions.[344] As construction increased, workers clubs were among the more common types of buildings.[345] Milinis articulated the general features and function of the workers clubs as "spaces designed for educating the proletariat and the new *byt*.[346] Among the necessary features of a club is a large hall, for

[343] http://moskva.kotoroy.net/ There is a book version of *Moskva Kotoroy Net*.

[344] Ikonnikov, *Russian Architecture of the Soviet Period*, 80.

[345] According to a review of workers clubs the report by A. Karra (possibly Karo) and Vasiley Simbirtsev, attendance at clubs waned and fewer clubs were being built in the 1930s. In 1928, the number of clubs was at 3,857; by the 1930s, there was "an epidemic of clubs closing." A. Karra and Vasiley Simbirtsev, "K resheniyou odnovo iz voprossov stroitelstva" in *Sovestkaya Arhitektura* no 3 Mai-Ijun (1931): 55-56.

[346] Duhamel described his experience of the Soviet clubs as vehicles for propaganda: "It is in the establishments of this type (lecture rooms, workers clubs) that one can observe leisure activities working their effects of propaganda. The conference halls are never short of speakers and the speakers never are

lectures, films, and accessibility to the workers every day after work. Access to the club should be on a main street and have an open field that displays construction technology." [347]

Milinis wanted a plan to assist in keeping the clubs both integral for the worker and embracing the communal social relations. He outlined features important to clubs:

> A park is a necessary element of any club for the purpose of relaxation purposes. [There should also be] a sports complex where one can play soccer, basketball, running track, etc. The vestibule should be the main artery of the club that would have a coat check, information bureau, telephone, cleaning, bathrooms, and hair salon. Outside the vestibule, there should be a cafeteria, hobby circles, auditorium and kindergarten.[348]

Essentially, workers' clubs would provide the infrastructure necessary to any neighborhood.

If one looks closely at the photographs taken shortly after *Kauchuk's* completion, one can see the street in front of the club is excavated (fig. 48). A photo taken later, with a figure in the foreground, possibly Mel'nikov, shows the street in front of *Kauchuk* with a tramline (fig. 49). Among the primary necessities was to provide a cohesive integration

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short of the public. The speeches or courses are not always about politics, but also include on agricultural methods, on agricultural chemistry, parasites, and weather." See Duhamel, *Le Voyage du Moscou*, 143.

[347] Milinis, "Problema rabochevo klyba," 112-113. Translation is not literal.

[348] Milinis, "Problema rabochevo klyba," 112-113.

of transportation into the city to meet the needs of the workers. Significant building projects were planned with proximity of trams either in existence or were already in the planning stages. One of the basic underlying motivation for the creation of cities throughout history was to maximize access between the population and their activities.[349]

Kauchuk was built within proximity to *Usachevka,* the workers' housing community designed by ASNOVA (fig. 50). *Usachevka* is comprised of massive housing blocks built on swamp grounds and a former site of a Civil War encampment.[350] These housing blocks were among the first of their kind. There is nothing particularly special about them. They are utterly utilitarian—four to five stories and arranged symmetrically around a green court. They radiate outward, over and over again, without distinction.[351] Within the square, is a green courtyard and nearby there is a "green zone." Photographs show children playing within view.

The most famous of the residents was the beloved writer, Mikhail Bulgakov, who lived in *Usachevka* from 1927-1934. It is surprising that his Surrealist description of Moscow could have its origins in the most utilitarian and yet privileged dwellings in Moscow. Indeed, *Usachevka* was mostly occupied by artists, intellectuals, distinguished

[349] Raymond J. Curran, *Architecture and the Urban Experience,* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1983), 57.

[350] Vladimir Sorokin, "My Ushachevka," http://archiproba.com/archiproba/03_issue___2011_files/archiproba_03_2011.pdf , 53.

[351] For an image and personal reflection see Sorokin's "My Ushachevka" entry in: http://archiproba.com/archiproba/03_issue___2011_files/archiproba_03_2011.pdf , 51-70.

medical doctors and military officers.[352] These illustrious residents of *Usachevka* remember a railroad that went directly to the factory. According to them, this was the outskirts—a swampy region, after all. Those who were given the unromantic apartments felt it was a privilege to live there; these socialist houses had all the amenities of a modern apartment, in spite of looking like functional and simple blocks. In 1934, the "legendary *Usachevka* bathhouse" was built to serve the workers.[353] The fame of the housing district became the source of the 1984 film "The House for Everybody" directed by Olga Kamarova.

Nikolai Ladovskii *Krasnye Vorota Metro* (1935)

In a semi-open square, indistinct today, stands an oddly shaped metro station *Krasnye Vorota* (fig. 51). It has the appearance of a loudspeaker. Ladovskii's only architectural example has lost much of its grandeur as the square has been dissected by a large arterial road. Though his direct output is unfortunately limited, the metro station is an important example of Ladovskii's ideas as a teacher and theoretician. In fact, this design may be linked to ASNOVA's manifesto where among the four points rally for contemporary architecture; they declare in point one: "A concert by those decreeing

[352] Sorokin, "My Ushachevka" 69.

[353] Sorokin, "My Ushachevka" 68.

contemporary architecture and point two: A loudspeaker for those constructing it."[354] It is tempting to link this pronouncement with the visual design of Ladovskii's metro stop.

The history of the site suggests that the radial circles are more likely to evoke a triumphal arch. Originally, very near the metro stop stood the triumphal entry point, *Krasnye Varote* (Red Gates). The flamboyant arch was built in 1775 (replacing the wooden version) to commemorate Elizabeth Petrovna's coronation and entry into Moscow. The arch was demolished by 1928, was the nearby *Church of the Three Witnesses*, supposedly to widen the square and accommodate traffic. Before Ladovskii's metro stop was built, Fomin—an old school Neo-classicist—made efforts to preserve the triumphal gate but to no avail. As of 1935, Fomin's *Dom NKPS* (1928-32) building faces Ladovskii's *Krasnye Vorota* station (fig. 52).

With so few examples of Ladovskii's work, it is difficult to identify a particular signature of his. As a faculty member and theoretical head of ASNOVA, his influence was largely on paper. ASNOVA group was responsible for housing projects, and they represent the goals and ideals that Ladovskii advocated for the general scheme of a socialist city.

There is an underlying irony to Ladovskii's *Red Gates*; what was once a site and entry point of an empress to the city of Moscow, has become the entry point of the worker—the proletarian's triumphal entry, one could say. Keeping the name of *Krasnye*

[354] ASNOVA's Izvestiia manifesto is reprinted in: https://thecharnelhouse.org/2012/09/16/soviet-avant-garde-architectural-journal-izvestiia-asnova

Varota, or Red Gates, for the metro station suggests that the history of the former triumphal arch was very much on the mind of the architect and the city dweller.

The Image of a Street

In Moscow there are only a handful of streets that have more than one modernist example. Miassnitskaia happens to be one of the few streets that has two of the most significant monuments of early 20th-century architecture—Velikovskii's *Gostorg* and Le Corbusier and Kolli's *Tzentrosoyuz* (1929-1936) (figs. 35, 53). Dating back five hundred years, the street was once one of the most prestigious streets in Moscow. It is an interesting street despite being narrow and unremarkable. A century ago, it was bustling, populated with pedestrians who loved to stroll it. It was once an example of bustling bourgeois trade and bourgeois taste. Its original name, derived from the word "meat" was initially occupied by the butchers who supplied the tsar's court with meat. No wonder Benjamin remarked, "For every step ones takes here is on named ground. And where one of these names is heard, in a flash imagination builds a whole quarter about the sound."[355] Eventually, the street was settled by Peter the Great's noblemen, and as the prestige of the street grew, rich merchants began moving in. By the end of the 19th century Miassnitskaia Ul. was a center for business and banking. After the revolution, the street was renamed to Pervomaiskaja (May 1st, otherwise known as day of the workers), then in 1935 to 1990, the street came to be known as Kirov, in commemoration to the Soviet politician. One must imagine Moscovites giving directions with so much

[355] Benjamin, "Moscow," 99.

insecurity. Each time a street was renamed, it could only further the disorientation (*ostrannenie*) of the city dweller—perhaps an experience that would lead to an "awakening" of the city dweller, even with inconvenience.

Walking along Miassnitskaia, one is surprised by the modest proportions of the street for what was once a commercial center. It has been described as a "dark and narrow hallway crowded with heavy furniture."[356] Two hundred years ago, like so many of the streets of Moscow, it was scenic. This all changed in the middle of the 19th century when it became the main thoroughfare to the center from three main train stations. Traffic became one of the major problems of the street. The narrow street had a city tram, a bus and a trolleybus and pedestrian traffic—already too congested for any automobile traffic. Gosplan saw that it would be far too expensive and difficult to expand the street and opted to run a road along the new Novokirovsky prospect to divert traffic from Miassnitskaia and run the first metro line under Miassnitskaia.[357]

As the centuries accumulated on Miassnitskaia, so did the architectural styles. In many respects Miassnitskaia exemplifies the aggregate collection of styles throughout the central parts of Moscow. One can even find a Chinese-style building once occupied by a tea firm. N.F. Popov, the head of the city's Directorate of Immovable Property, writes in *Izvestiia* in 1925, "Miassnitskaia Boulevard doesn't need either churches or hospitals. It needs multi-story buildings made of steel and reflecting glass: as much as possible and as

[356] Fedocuyk, *Moskva v Koltse Sadovih,* (Moskva: Astrel, 2009), 198.

[357] Fedocuyk, *Moskva v Koltse Sadovih,* 198.

little stone."[358] Though *Gostorg* answered this need, it was and is utterly out of place—not as much as Le Corbusier's *Tzentrosoyuz* but for the decade that it stood alone, as the bastion of all things modern and contemporary, its severity is noticeable.

The prestige and function of Miassnitskaia (May 1st Street) required significant site analysis, evidenced by the continued struggle that Le Corbusier experienced with building *Tsentrosoyuz.*[359] Le Corbusier actually acknowledged the realities of Miassnitskaia in his proposal, "Given that Miassnitskaia Street is extremely noisy and relatively narrow, we have set back the commercial services block behind a tree-lined garden."[360]

Le Corbusier had plans for the general district in which Miassnitskaia was located, as well as the appearance of his *Tzentrosoyuz* on the street. In an outline for the projected site, Le Corbusier identifies on the site the nearby street and proposed green area. Speaking of *Tzentrosoyuz* at a conference in Buenos Aires, Le Corbusier explained:

> Completing the architectural symphony, positioned in front of the building in the familiar posture of organs of human dimensions, here are the concrete, stone faced awnings that serve to protect the vehicles in the street as they arrive….This winter we shall transplant along the vast, limpid facades a number of beautiful

[358] Popov's article "Novaya Moskva-ne myzei stariny" *Izvestiia*, 1925. November 22.

[359] See: Cohen, *Mystique of the USSR*, 65. *Tzentrocoyuz's* glass walls and disruption of the street during construction were once again a concern for Moscow's building commission.

[360] Le Corbusier's handwritten document titled, "Plan pour l'edification des batiments du Tsentrocoyuz de Moscou" is in Cohen's *Mystique of the USSR*, 65.

> trees whose arabesques will enrich the composition and whose presence will be more and more welcome to us as we study architecture and city planning.[361]

Over the course of building *Tsentrosoyuz,* Le Corbusier had to negotiate the numerous issues that were raised by the building commission. Among them, was the heating system. The engineer's code book specified conditions and requirements for heating and ventilation, and Le Corbusier's attempts to introduce new techniques for heating are met with skepticism. With such strict budgetary conditions for construction in the Soviet Union, it is not surprising that betting on an unknown system, which might not meet regulations, would be of significant concern. Indeed, walls comprised entirely or nearly entirely of glass are not practical due to the weather conditions. Daylight was essential, as the code book specified that all living spaces, like bedrooms, must have daylight, but a wall of windows was not and is not practical in Russian winters. If one looks at photographs of these glass-walled buildings, like *Tsentrosoyuz* and *Gostorg*, one can see curtains covering the windowed walls (figs. 54, 55). Kaganovich complained in 1931, "In our construction, it is sometimes like this: they built a house, spent a lot of money, but the sun facing windows are in the W.C. kitchen and shower, but the bedroom happens to face north."[362] Both Kaganovich and P.A. Mamatov addressed the hazards of building in the cold winter months, specifying that plasterwork and foundation work must not be done during the winter months. It was also difficult to acquire and transport wood.

[361] Le Corbusier's lecture "Les techniques," is quoted in Cohen's *Mystique of the USSR*, 90.

[362] Kaganovich, (1931): 23.

From the office of Moscow governing engineer, P. Mamatov the "*Vremenye Stroitel'nye pravila dlja goroda Moskvye*" (Temporary Construction Rules for the City of Moscow) defends the need for norms and regulations. Mamatov wrote, "It has come to our attention that we can no longer put off the creation of construction rules for Moscow, [we must] come up with necessary norms that confront the builder." [363] He stated that it is the role of the government to make these specifications even though it may be difficult and complicated at this point in time. The engineering office was to be responsible for approval of plans, fire hazard and safety, plumbing and sanitary codes and their implementation.[364] It is a lengthy document that includes the decision of the Mossovet RK and KD, temporary construction regulations for the city of Moscow outlined earlier by Mamatov.

Judging by the document and the regulations, construction in Moscow was by no means as chaotic as Nikolai Miljutin had described, nor an accidental affair. The city engineer was to grant approval on various aspects of construction, including reconstruction of buildings of historic value, whether or not one can put a fence on a sidewalk, the height of advertisement boards, etc. Any removal of buildings for the purpose of construction must first be cleared with the engineer. The builder and architect must also include an agreement to abide the instructions ECOSO implemented by SNK from April 24th, 1924. In the planning stages, one must have in the proposal: a site of the

[363] P. A. Mamatov, "Vremenye stroitel'nye pravila dlia goroda Moskvye" printed from *Ot ypravlenye moskovkovo gybernskovo inzhenera* (Moskva: Mosgyblit, No 9544, 1928), 3.

[364] Mamatov, "Vremenye Stroitel'nye Pravila dlja Goroda Moskvye" 3-4.

location for the building and the owner and the neighbors must be present; one must include the existing plans that are housed in the archives. Later in the text, if the neighbors or interested parties get involved in the technical aspect of the construction, the engineer's office will get involved in the complaints/disputes.[365] It has already been noted that Velikovskii experienced such complaints.

The initial proposals submitted to the engineer's office had to include technical documents, plan of the plot, plan of each floor, cross section, and façade of the new construction. Basic aesthetic demands were also of importance as Regulation 18 indicates: before granting permission from the engineering office, the office will oversee so that the façade of significant buildings answered general aesthetic needs. The regulation continues, "Means must be taken so as to not clutter the streets with barricades and *antihydozhesvenimi* (anti-aesthetic) advertisements and the like.[366] Aesthetic needs or anti-aesthetic qualities are not defined and judging by the varied nature of construction during the late 1920s and 1930s, it does not appear that the engineering office took any real measures to dictate aesthetic demands.

However, it should be stressed that height and easement play a role in viewer perception. Factors of building height were dictated in accordance to street and easement, known as "the red line," and they were to be strictly maintained. In the specification of Note 44, it states "the area that is formed between the red line and the

[365] Mamatov, "Vremenye Stroitel'nye Pravila dlja Goroda Moskvye," 9-10.

[366] Mamatov, "Vremenye stroitel'nye pravila dlia goroda Moskvye," 12.

front of the [building] façade's line may be predetermined by traffic, lawn, palisade, etc., and is dependent upon the appearance of the street, the general panorama and the like."[367] There were even regulations regarding street signs and glowing advertisements. According to Regulation 175, advertisements may not ruin the view of the street; they must be securely affixed and must not bother those living in the building. [368]

Throughout the document, illustrations and schematics help illustrate the points. It is mostly a technical document concerned with safety and access of buildings. It is pedantic as one would expect an engineering book on codes would be. Of interest is that it does not treat Moscow uniformly. The strictest codes and necessity for approval is for the innermost center. The regulations, such as height of buildings, for example, tend to relax somewhat as one moves out from the center.

Despite the very detailed regulations, architects continued to criticize the lack of standards and regulations that were important to them. ASNOVA complained in a 1931 issue of *Sovetskaia Arhitektura*:

> We must point out, that still questions of architectural compositions, ensembles have not be addressed, there have been no codes or regulations established for floor levels and the character of the building. Often newly built homes, while being of relatively high quality, still cannot help but affect poorly to the

[367] Mamatov, "Vremenye stroitel'nye pravila dlia goroda Moskvye," 18. See #44's footnote or qualification.

[368] Mamatov, "Vremenye stroitel'nye pravila dlia goroda Moskvye," 56-57. Code 175.

> surrounding buildings. Likewise, questions regarding light and color compositions of the city have not been concretely answered.[369]

ASNOVA did make a valid point that the general aesthetic character for construction had not been clearly defined, though one may argue that Gosplan and Mossovet hesitated in outlining specific aesthetic designs for good reason. Regulations regarding the number of floors, however, are clearly specified in Mamatov's codes for the city.

The changes created by socialist reconstruction not only meant an alteration to the spatial organization but to an entirely different approach to city planning. In 1931 German architect and Berlin's main city planner, Martin Wagner lamented when he considered the work done on designing Soviet cities vis-à-vis German city planners, "the work of our German city planners is 90 percent nonproductive and useless."[370] Wagner remembered visiting the director of the Public Bank in Moscow and looking at the various building proposals that included raw material inventory, economic surveys, soil tests, traffic studies, and a detailed time-table for the completion of the projects. He was impressed by what he saw to be a cohesive and meaningful national approach to building cities.[371] Judging by the file on Velikovskii's *Gostorg*, there was, indeed, a requirement

[369] ASNOVA "Arhitekturnoe oformlenie goroda," 41.

[370] Martin Wagner, "Berlin: Russia Builds Cities," 209. Wagner had a naïve view believing that the elimination of private property meant fewer jurisdictions or building inspectors.

[371] Wagner, "Berlin: Russia Builds Cities," 205.

to build with proximity to trams, not to disrupt the traffic, and even to consider the glare of the windows. [372]

An awareness of spatial considerations is addressed in the third issue of *Sovetskaia Arhitektura* (1931). It features a compilation of SASS (Sector of Architects of Socialist Building) including ASNOVA and VOPRA and their views on how to create a socialist city.[373]ASNOVA addresses the design of the city stating,

> The goal or task of the architect is to organize viewer perception by spatial design of the streets and squares. Streets by way of dynamics of the architectural mass must orient the viewer in relation to the center and periphery, exactly the same way the squares should be built by the principles of architectural dependence on the center.[374]

The following statement is key in understanding that the original site or site-specificity was of concern to the members of ASNOVA: "Work on the plans and designs of new cities, it is necessary to study the methods of construction plans of old squares and streets and discard the unnecessary while accepting the obvious culture that they have."[375] Among the features that architects were to pay close attention to were principles that

[372]Multiple sources confirm this requirement, from archives to publications.

[373] One can see the polemics between VOPRA and ASNOVA quite clearly in this issue.

[374] ASNOVA "Arhitekturnoe oformlenie goroda" *Sovestskaya Arhitektura* no. 3 Mai-Eun (1931): 41.

[375] ASNOVA, "Arhitekturnoe oformlenie goroda," 41.

include "size and form of the squares, their compositional dependence and relationship to that which has been built and to the empty space."[376]

ASNOVA criticized OSA's plans for *Serpuhovskii Zastavye,* noting their failure to acknowledge the specificity of the site. They wrote: "Given [OSA's] abstract idea for the square, one can apply it to any city in any system. [They failed to] analyze the general character [of the square]. It is completely missing from the project. Plans for the square have been decided upon statically." [377] An architect is supposed to be a *rezhisser* (movie director) who understands proportions within the frame—the relationship between buildings and spaces. Despite the attention that Soviet architects paid to the general features of the sites they were working with, existing architectural studies have failed to address this nuance.

It has been my contention that the architectural "interventions" in the city of Moscow were intentional props to awaken the Moscow inhabitant from slumber into consciousness. Examples ranging from the Vesnin brothers' sprawling palace of culture that sits at the site of a former monastery and cemetery to Mel'nikov's *Kauchuk* workers' club that stands across from the *Church of Archangel Michael* are obvious dialectic ploys. The transformation from the former cultural clubs, e.g., the church, to the new workers' clubs, was manifest not just as a visual difference but also as an important

[376] ASNOVA, "Arhitekturnoe oformlenie goroda," 41.

[377] ASNOVA, "Arhitekturnoe oformlenie goroda," 41.

cultural one. One cannot imagine that this obvious contrast was not recognized by the city dweller.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Grounding for the Psychology of Space

"The awakening, the activity of forces which will create a new art and culture in Soviet Russia" Lenin said, "is good, very good."[378]

"The direct carrier of the spiritual forces, moulder of the sensibilities of the general public, which today are slumbering and tomorrow will awake, is architecture."

–Bruno Taut [379]

How did the city dweller experience the metropolis in the 1920s? Our own experience of Moscow or Berlin today is undoubtedly different and therefore does not serve as the most accurate guide. According to numerous essays published in the late 19th and early 20th century, particularly by the Frankfurt School and the French Surrealists, the metropolis was viewed as a psychological spectacle. More particularly, Georg Simmel, Siegfried Kracauer, and Walter Benjamin, believed that the metropolitan mass lived in a state of powerless automatism, a kind of functional mastery without deep consciousness, at least not until a "shock" was introduced into the environment. [380]

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[378] Zetkin, "Reminiscences of Lenin," 13.

[379] Bruno Taut, "A Programme for Architecture," (1918) is reprinted in *Programs and Manifestoes on 20th-Century Architecture* ed. Ulrich Conrads (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971), 41.

[380] All were known to Russian readers as translations of their essays were available. Furthermore, Benjamin had visited Moscow and had written "Moscow Diary," among his other essays on cities. See: Benjamin, *Moscow Diary* ed. Gary Smith, trans. Richard Sieburth, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986).

Simmel postulated that man is a creature of difference, a kind of urban animal that has become physiologically attuned to difference and has had to learn to cope with it.[381] Simmel's view suggests that the urban animal is a hyper creature, tamed by the static and hermetic environment. And yet much of human daily experience is operating precisely on blasé habituation and robotic habits, such as conveyed in the factory scenes in Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927).

As far as the German theorists were concerned, the city dweller oscillated between catatonic and anxious states of being. Both Simmel and Spengler saw the man of the city as anxious with a heightened sense of being, provided he was not "stupid"[382] Any alterations to the environment leads to a heightened state of coping, if you will. One sees Simmel's and Spengler's interpretation of man in the city as an intellectual inheritance from the Greeks. According to Aristotle, the city is a civilizing place for man and stands in opposition of the human's natural animal self. One might say that the human experiences an ontological crisis in the city, brought on by a dialectic experience of the self as an animal that must negate itself as an animal and act as the rational human. The city then has the potential to shock the human animal into a state of its own contradictory nature.

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[381] Henrik Reeh's *Ornaments of the Metropolis: Siegfried Kracauer and Modern Urban Culture.* (Cambridge: MIT Press, Cambridge 2004.), 24. See also Georg Simmel's "Metropolis" essay.

[382] Georg Simmel believed that the "stupid" man experienced the city in a blasé fashion versus the intellectual man that was fully aware. See Simmel's "The Metropolis and Mental Life" (1903). This rather offensive way of seeing man actually comes from the Greek idea that anyone who lived outside the city was an *idiōtēs* or politically unengaged.

Even on a more basic level, ask any city dweller today what it means for a street to be closed for traffic even if for a day and their day appears to fall apart at the thought of navigating a different route. The constant change that takes place in the metropolis thus has considerable implication for both physical space and subjectivity.[383] Of course any city is a site of ongoing creation of memories and erasures, leaving the subject, i.e. the city dweller in a perpetual state of habit and change.

Walter Benjamin's "Moscow Diary" is not unlike his other essays on cities. They are collections of sketches that are informed by contrast. He states in the opening sentence of "Moscow," "More quickly than Moscow itself, one gets to know Berlin through Moscow."[384] It is critical to see that, similar to my claims that modernist buildings functioned like dialectical devices within the city, Benjamin understood Berlin by means of its contrast to Moscow: Berlin is clean, quiet and so Western in comparison to Moscow. Benjamin's description of Moscow is tainted with the perspective of the "Asiatic East;" where colorful wares and street peddlers gave Moscow an air of an Eastern bazaar. One senses a disappointment in his treatment of Moscow, not only for the failed romance with Asja Lacis but a genuine disappointment with the bureaucratization of Soviet communism. What Benjamin does, at the very least, is remind the reader that a city is a site of personal and psychological experience and the space in the head also colors the space outside.

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[383] Reeh, *Ornaments of the Metropolis: Siegfried Kracauer and Modern Urban Culture*, 157.

[384] Walter Benjamin, "Moscow" in *Reflections,* ed. Peter Demetz (New York: Schocken Books, 1978), 97.

Also emphasizing psychological aspects of experience of place, Kracauer saw changes of the dweller's environment as kinds of shocks, noting, "For a shock to be able to be produced because the spatial framework has lost its previous function, there must have been at least a practical relationship to the place that makes it possible to register a change."[385] That is, for shock to occur, one has to have had a fixed sense of a space or a fixed idea in the first place. Modernity relies on a fixed point for erasure—an antagonism towards "personal" perspectives and spaces. Henrik Reeh sees Kracauer's point thusly: "Rather than a simple destruction, a shift takes place from particular, narratable, and organizable memory toward a general *urban subjectivity*."[386] I suggest that instead of lamenting an archaic, highly subjective, and personal experience of the city, Soviet theorists wanted to rewrite these medieval attachments into a general social space.[387] As in, it is not your city, it is our city. We live and work here together.

[385] Reeh, *Ornaments of the Metropolis: Siegfried Kracauer and Modern Urban Culture*, 156.

[386] Reeh, *Ornaments of the Metropolis: Siegfried Kracauer and Modern Urban Culture*, 157. Mass subjectivity and personal subjectivity are outside the goals of this dissertation. There are indeed serious questions to be raised in regards to subjectivity in general, individual subjectivity let alone mass subjectivity. Adorno's letter to Benjamin anticipates some of these questions. See Walter Benjamin's *Correspondences 1910-1940* eds. Gershom Scholem and Theodore W. Adorno. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994), 497. My own attitudes towards subjectivity are set aside for the materialist belief in the possibility of transcending habitual performance.

[387] Here, I am making reference to traditional views of Haussmann's Paris that one gathers from Benjamin's "Expose of 1935,"12 and "Haussmannization, Barricade Fighting," 120-149 and the transformation of Paris from a medieval city into an urban metropolis. The intimate spaces created by narrow and winding streets were demolished and replaced with wide streets that could accommodate mass spectacle and traffic. It is also a well-known fact that barricading streets for revolutionary purposes became more difficult when streets were enlarged.

As Muestberg showed, historical aesthetics were tied to social psychology, and normative aesthetics were tied to the individual.[388] This idea is accords with Dziga Vertov's opening intertitles in *Man with a Movie Camera* that attempt to distance individual creativity and a narrative that focuses on a "hero," to feature instead men, women, children, old, and young who live in this composite city, which is understood as Moscow; they are the main characters driving the scenes. The title, *Man with a Movie Camera* is better translated as *Person with a Movie Camera*. This translation is more accurate in suggesting an even more generic example of the "artist" or "filmmaker," who is neither man nor woman, but rather a "person."

Kracauer used the example of the woman who in the theater felt herself as the "I," but in the cinema became dissolved into all things and beings. [389] Kracauer and his fellow Frankfurt School theorists believed that film, at its best, had the potential to destabilize the individual ego and unite disparate beings with the environment and other beings, which, at least allegorically, threatened bourgeois power. Such goals corresponded with Soviet avant-gardists. Malevich is known to have said, "Any internal, any individual, any 'I understand', has no place."[390] Mayakovskii's poem "*Aftobosum po Moskve*," ends with, "This is I! This is We!"[391] Similarly, Dziga Vertov begins his essay in *Kino Fot*

[388] Vygotskii, "Psihologicheskye problemye v iskusstve" (Psychological Problem in Art), 412.

[389] Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* introduction, Miriam Bratu Hansen. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1960), 159.

[390] Paperny, *Architecture in the Age of Stalin: Culture Two*, xx.

[391] Of note, the influence of the plural "we" must have had wide appeal. Evgeny Zamyatin's *We* was published in 1924 in the West, though not widely available to Russian audiences.

with the title "We, Variant of Manifesto" and throughout the essay stresses the term, "We."[392] Writer, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, in 1921, compared the crowds of moviegoers to the masses of big industrial cities.[393] It is precisely what a Marxist would desire.

According to Soviet Psychologist Lev Vygotskii, Marxist theory of art attempts to identify and resolve questions between theoretical aesthetics and their tie to psychology.[394] He wrote, "I am inclined to think that we must identify socialist and collective psychology…the object of a social psychology is a psychology of a single individual."[395] Vygotskii explained:

> A word may have a certain meaning to an individual until that individual shares with a group and they discuss its meaning, thus making a collective experience. In essence, the collective is a compilation of private psychology that gets shared, be it art, literature, architecture, we learn this from war, and experiences in church. It is the reflexivity of the social, versus the collective.[396]

Vygotskii continued:

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[392] Dziga Vertov, "Mye Variant Manifesta" in *Kino Fot* no. (1922): 1, 11-12. The manifesto is very much a futurist cliché, calling for the death of old filmmaking. Instead, films ought to embrace machines. Vertov proclaimed:"We welcome dynamic geometries, outpacing points, lines, and density of space."

[393] Hofmannsthal's 1921 *The Substitute for Dreams* is mentioned in Kracauer's *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality*, 167.

[394] Vygotskii, "Psihologicheskye problemye v iskusstve" (Psychological Problem in Art), 410.

[395] Vygotskii, "Psihologicheskye problemye v iskusstve" (Psychological Problem in Art), 410.

[396] Vygotskii, "Psihologicheskye problemye v iskusstve" (Psychological Problem in Art), 411.

> There is a relation between reflexology of an individual and collective reflexology, the former tries to determine the specifics of an individual to find the difference between the individualities of different individuals, and determine reflexological bases for the difference, while the collective reflexology which studies signs of mass or collective activities aims to find out how through the relationship of different individuals in social groups, and resolving their individual differences to create social products from their activities.[397]

Art, notably film, and architecture would thereby serve as means of creating a collective experience that might minimize individual differences and aid in the socialist objective.

The Awakening: Psychology of Architecture

As with many prerevolutionary trends or concepts, psychology also had to undergo a Marxist revision. Attempts to understand the human psyche had to be grounded with a scientific and material premise. Psychology that favored knowledge independent from reality, in other words, metaphysical knowledge, was deemed bourgeois and useless for creating class consciousness.[398] Psychoanalysis, on the whole, was viewed suspiciously by Soviet Marxists, who saw the discipline as overly focused on the immaterial "psyche." Even though attitudes towards psychology were marked by

[397] Vygotskii, "Psihologicheskye problemye v iskusstve" (Psychological Problem in Art), 411.

[398] For a comprehensive discussion of Soviet psychology see: Levy Rahmani, *Soviet Psychology: Philosophical, Theoretical and Experimental Issues* (New York: International Universities Press, 1973), 6-19.

caution, some one hundred psychotechnic institutions flourished in the Soviet Union from 1927 to 1930.[399]

In order to survive or thrive, the discipline was refashioned with dialectical materialism.[400] Western readers will recognize Ivan Pavlov, made famous by conditioning of dogs and perhaps Vygotskii, whose *Mind in Society* was published by Harvard University Press in 1978 as exemplars of acceptable, empiricist-driven psychology.[401] Vygotskii explained his method:

> The dialectical approach, while admitting the influence of nature on man, asserts that man, in turn, affects nature and creates through his changes in nature new natural conditions for his existence. This position is the keystone of our approach to the study and interpretation of man's higher psychological functions and serves as the basis for the new methods of experimentation and analysis that we advocate.[402]

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[399]Despite its popularity with ASNOVA, Ladovskii, in particular, was under scrutiny and criticism. For a critical take, see: Vortrag von R. Higer, "Formalizm," *Sovremennaia Arhitektura* 4 (1929), 146. He saw it as a harmless but impractical philosophy. For more on psychotenics, see Vronskaya, "The Productive Unconscious: Architecture, Experimental Psychology and the Techniques of Subjectivity in Soviet Russia, 1919-1935," 131.

[400] Rahhmani, *Soviet Psychology: Philosophical, Theoretical and Experimental Issues*, 9. Even Freud, who grounded the soul to the *id* and subjected it to social conditions, was far too preoccupied, according to Lenin, on the sexual. Materialism was preferred, unless it was overly mechanistic.

[401] In addition to *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*, eds. Michael Cole, Vera John-Steiner, Sylvia Scribner and Ellen Souberman (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), more recent publications include, *The Essential Vygotskii* eds. Robert W. Rieber and David K. Robinson (New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2004).

[402] Vygotskii, *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*, 60-61.

On the heels of Pavlov's stimulus-response theories, Vygotskii believed that, "Every art object is viewed by the psychologists as a system of irritants deliberately organized to cause an aesthetic reaction." [403] By analyzing the structure of the irritants, we are then able to recreate the same structure, and thereby the reaction. What Pavlov and Vygotskii both demonstrated was that conditioning was possible and could be recreated in a lab.[404] Vygotskii's faith in the formal qualities to illicit responses and the ability to study and recreate them confirms ideas held true by artists and architects—art does have the potential to communicate by means of its formal qualities. [405]

Though Kandinsky's romantic, Theosophy-inspired art lost its currency, the idea that forms emit emotional and aesthetic sensations was never discarded, at least not by the Rationalists. According to Dokuchaev, the expressive forms are determined by "the conscious will of the architect-artists wishing to imbue architectural form with specific emotional-aesthetic qualities and characteristics."[406] The thing that distinguished Kandinsky's psychology of forms from that of the Rationalists is their attempt to ground their psychology of forms to a scientific methodology. Psychology was acceptable as

[403] Senkevich, *Trends in Soviet Architectural Thought, 1917-32: The Growth and Decline of the Constructivist and Rationalist Movements,* 409-418.

[404] Vygotskii supported Pavlov's work but stressed that it was not entirely sufficient to account the complexity within the higher, specifically human forms of behavior. For a more thorough distinction, see is *Mind in Society*, 60-61.

[405] See Juhani Pallasmaa's *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses* (West Sussex: Wiley, 2012) as a contemporary psychology of architecture and space. Pallasma is heavily invested in Phenomenology and Surrealism and at times, his analysis is burdened with theory. Nevertheless, his book is useful in reminding the reader of the physical and mental embodiment in space.

[406] Dokuchaev is quoted in Senkevich, *Trends in Soviet Architectural Thought, 1917-32: The Growth and Decline of the Constructivist and Rationalist Movements*, 389.

long as it was not grounded in spirituality.[407] Formalism for the Rationalists had to be tested against a scientific method, or one that at least seemed like one. To test their theories, Ladovskii and ASNOVA colleagues designed five contraptions to measure the way the human eye perceives various spatial differences in his "psychotechnical laboratory."[408] Among the feelings that may be induced by architectural forms are: power and weakness; grandeur and abasement and finitude and infinity. Moreover a three-dimensional object was to be perceived in its context and "distorted" by human vision. ASNOVA members also recognized the potential to excite participation of the viewer by increasing stimuli beyond the comfortable state.[409] Hence "irritants" or "*ostranennia*" would be useful in awakening the proletariat.

While the OSA members distinguished themselves from ASNOVA by focusing on function over aesthetic form, they too were interested in psychology.[410] OSA's

[407] Kandinsky had proposed a Psychophysiological Laboratory at INKhUK but left for Berlin in 1921 once the climate at INKhuK became hostile. The ideas for a laboratory, testing psychological and physiological responses to form, had been implemented to some degree or other by Mikhail Matyushin and Leonid Sabaneev at GAHhN and Ladovskii at VKhUTEMAS. For more see the introduction to Vasily Kandinsky's "Plan for the Physicopsychological Department of the Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences 1923," included in *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde Theory and Criticism 1902-1934*, ed. and trans. John E. Bowlt (New York: The Viking Press, 1976), 197.

[408] See Senkevich for a description , *Trends in Soviet Architectural Thought, 1917-32: The Growth and Decline of the Constructivist and Rationalist Movements*, 395.

[409] Milka Bliznakova, "The Rationalist Movement in Soviet Architecture of the 1920s" in *Russian Formalism: A Collection of Article and Texts in Translation*, eds Stephen Bann and John Bowlt, (New York: Barns & Noble, 1973), 157.

[410] *SA* issue 2 (1929) has several articles on color. One of them, "Zemlyanye kraski i ih zakrepiteli" (Mineral paints and their binding) covers the technical aspects of color written by Professor N.F. Gurin and Professor N.M. Chernashev. Also there is an article, "K Voprossy o vliyaniy tzveta na cheloveka" (On the question of influence of color on the human) and as the title suggests, is interested in the psychology of color. It is written by Von D-R Pomortzeff.

publication, *SA,* included and considered the psychological and physiological impact of architecture. It is important to underscore that despite OSA's emphasis on functionality over aesthetic demands, they accepted that architecture had psychological effects on human beings. Ginzburg, a distinguished member of OSA and editor of *SA*, was inspired by the German psychologist Willhelm Wundt, who believed that certain forms were more pleasing than others, particularly those that require the "least physical effort in perception" including symmetry, rhythm and straight lines. Like ASNOVA, Ginzburg also held that the environment could determine behavior and consciousness. He designed his window arrangement and color harmonies, knowing that they would produce a pleasing psychology to the inhabitants of his *Narkomfin.*[411]

In "*K Voprosy ob ideologii konstruktivisma v sovremennoi arhitekturi*" (Questions of Ideology of Constructivism in Contemporary Architecture) Roman Higer stresses, "the central place in ideology of Constructivism is taken up by the problem of organic unity of the architecture to the environment with social life, industrial, economic and **psychological** conditions…"[412] The editors or Higer himself bolds the word "psychological," and it is important to stress precisely that Constructivists were indeed interested in psychology, and one of the roles of the architect was to pay attention not just to the unity of architecture to the environment but to its psychological impact. Vesnin had

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[411] Hudson, *Blueprints and Blood*¸ 50, 32-34.

[412] Roman. Khiger, "K voprossy ob ideologii konstruktivisma v sovremennoi arhitekture" in *SA* no.3 (1928): 93.

the following in mind: "Every object created by a contemporary artist must enter life as an active force organizing man's consciousness, influencing him psychologically."[413]

In the last chapter of the "Konstructivist Manifesto," Gan viewed architecture and the communist city as the ultimate challenge for Constructivists. For him, the communist city represented the first attempt to organize consciousness and crystallize the idea of public property.[414] Such an idea sounds similar to the Rationalists' desire to develop forms that would arouse man's psychological and physiological nature by way of perception.[415] Vesnin, a member of OSA, wrote, "An artist must then look after his own affairs, and his affair is the effect of form on the consciousness" adding, "Some objects have an organizing effect on the awareness, others have a weakening effect, and often objects have a physiological effect that stimulates energy and force." [416]

[413]From Vesnin's 1922 "Credo."

[414] Senkevich, *Trends in Soviet Architectural Thought, 1917-32: The Growth and Decline of the Constructivist and Rationalist Movements,* 148.

[415] For more in-depth analysis of psychology and art during the Soviet period see Alla Vronskaya and Margarete Vöhringer . Vronskaya's 2014 dissertation : "The Productive Unconscious: Architecture, Experimental Psychology and the Techniques of Subjectivity in Soviet Russia, 1919-1935" is an excellent source on Ladovskii's experiments at VKhUTEMAS. Margarete Vöhringer, "*Avantgarde Und Psychotechnik : Wissenschaft, Kunst Und Technik DerWahrnehmungsexperimente in Der Fru*hen Sowjetunion* (Gd'ttingen Wallstein Verlag, 2007). Also, her more recent and unpublished manuscript for upcoming collection, Margarete Vöhringer "Experimental Psychology in Praxis: Nicolai Ladovskii's Psychotechnical Architecture." For a prior interrogation of the subject, see: Senkevich, *Trends in Soviet Architectural Thought, 1917-32: The Growth and Decline of the Constructivist and Rationalist Movemens),* 301, and briefly in Bliznakova's, "The Rationalist Movements in Soviet Architecture of the 1920s," *Russian Formalism: A Collection of Articles and Texts in Translation,* eds. Stephen Bann and John Bowlt (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1973), 147-161.

[416] Selim Omarovich Khan-Magomedov, *Aleksander Vesnin and Russian Constructivism* (New York, Rizzoli, 1986), 87.

SA also dedicated a considerable amount of space to psychology of color in the second issue of its 1929 publication. In "Tzvet v arhitekturye" (color in architecture), Ginsburg expressed his influence by *Travail et Plaisir* (Work and Pleasure) (1904), a study on color by the physiologist Ch. Féré.[417] He addressed the way color played a role in psycho-physiological activity in humans, including their ability to work. In all, the article is very technical, with considerations of factors like the reflective quality of various colors. Barsch, also reviews Ch. Féré study in the same issue and concludes, like Ginsburg, that it valuable to conduct experiments with color.[418] It makes use of graphs and indexes, stressing that psychology of color can be a scientific endeavor. Blue and violet, according to Barsch have a depressive quality, and bring about a fatigue after one is exposed to them for long periods.

Le Corbusier was also sensitive to the psychological aspects of color and form. In a letter to Nikolai Kolli, Le Corbusier responds to the color samples for *Tzentrosoyuz* : "The colors are those of the boudoir, and not of the Soviet Union!...They do not match the psychological state of the U.S.S.R.—such, at least, as we would like to imagine it, that is, fully active, and not asleep or immersed in drawing-room discussion.[419] Le Corbusier's attention to color is consistent with Soviet architects who saw color as having

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[417] Moisej Ginsburg, "Tzvet v arhitekturye," *SA* no.2 (1929): 74-77. He references a previous issue of *SA* no.2 (1928) that included Féré's observation. Ch. Féré, Travail et plaisir. Nouvelles études expérimentales de psycho-mécanique" (Work and Pleasure. New Experimental Study of the Psycho-Physiological) (1904).

[418] Mikhail Barsch, "Tzvet i rabota," *SA* no.2 (1929): 76-79.

[419] Letter to Nikolai Kolli, written in Paris, 1934 is included in Jean-Louis Cohen's *Le Corbusier and the Mystique of USSR: Theories and Projects for Moscow 1928-36*, 96.

psychological significance. Le Corbusier identifies red as a color that enlivens, and yellow as dangerous.[420] Despite Le Corbusier's awareness of color on psychology, Roman Higer had the following to say about *Tzentrosoyuz* :

> The building is not joyous. It is severe and sad. Its transparent expanses of glass seem monotonous and out of place. The artistry of the interiors, the tenuousness of its facades, the purity of its proportions, the abstract quality of its volumes and the dazzling display of its windows are here so impersonal that they do not appear to constitute an expressive architectural language for the observer. It is as yet no more than a skeleton, and not the flesh and blood of an architectural body.[421]

Higer's critique came in 1935, and it has been suggested that the failure of *Tzentrosoyuz* was a reflection of the changing attitudes towards Constructivism in general, in favor of Revivalism. But one cannot help but admit that *Tzentrosoyuz* is a behemoth. While other buildings that also stand in stark contrast to their neighbors succeed at their interplay, *Tzentrosoyuz* is a blunt hit on the head. Higer was not out rightly biased against Constructivism since he looked favorably on Vesnins' *Zil Palace of Culture* and Ginzburg and Ignatii Milinis' *Narkomfin* (1928-1930) (fig. 42, fig. 56). [422] Thus, his critique should be considered as a sincere evaluation.

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[420] Cohen's *Le Corbusier and the Mystique of USSR: Theories and Projects for Moscow 1928-36*, 96.

[421] Roman Higer's "Arhitektura revoluitsionnikh let," *Arhitektura SSSR* 3 no. 10-11 (1935). Also: Cohen *Mystique of USSR Le Corbusier*, 104.

[422] See Jean-Louis Cohen's *Le Corbusier and the Mystique of USSR: Theories and Projects for Moscow 1928-36*, footnote 109, 104.

Presence of Absence

After the revolution, the (re)construction of Moscow was as much about communicating through absence, removing key cultural buildings, as it was about communicating with new construction. It is noteworthy that Moscow lost thousands of buildings for the purpose of fuel, or socialist reconstruction. The selective demolition of sites, even when it was unnecessary, underscores the desire of Gosplan (State Planning Committee) to communicate the ideological restructuring of life.

Due to financial and material shortages, construction projects often stood unfinished, their carcasses standing while "people prayed for sanity." Empty lots like the one in Kitai Gorod suggested promise of something new or a grave for the old (fig. 57). A lone wooden house appears to have been left on *Staraia Square*, in Kitai Gorod, and eventually removed. I am reminded of what Siegfried Kracauer noted about cultural effacement, "The ornaments, which formed a sort of bridge to the past have been removed. Now the robbed facades stand without any anchorage in time and are a symbol of historyless change that is completed behind them."[423] However poetic, Kracauer fails to recognize that the denudation speaks to its own history, one complicated by the past, even more so than the facades that line up in a row with political accord.

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[423] For Kracauer's quote, see: Reeh, *Ornaments of the Metropolis: Siegfried Kracauer and Modern Urban Culture*, 157. Reeh proposes that Kracauer was inspired by Benjamin's essay on Moscow for his own analysis on "Straβenvolk in Paris." Benjamin's correspondences do suggest Benjamin's anticipation of Kracauer's critique of his "Moscow" essay. Kracauer had been trained as an architect.

Not only did Benjamin, but also, Wells, noted the number of churches that dotted the Moscow skyline.[424] The Soviet antagonism towards religion would explain why so many of the churches throughout Moscow and their cemeteries were demolished or nearly demolished—as the case with *Zil Palace of Culture*.[425] In their place, worker clubs and metro lines were put in place. *Tsentrosoyuz* stood atop a church. In 1931, perhaps, the most significant and, some would say, egregious demolition of the very prominent *Cathedral of Christ the Savior* (1839-1883) took place, for the construction of *Palace of the Soviets* that was never built (fig. 58). Later, an open-air swimming pool was built in both their places. The Cathedral towered above other buildings in the Moscow skyline, only to be replaced with a cavernous hole for the purpose of swimming.

In a cramped city, one must consider the use value of each building, but on Kropotkinoi Ul. on the Tzarinskii Pereulok (corner) stands a unique example of just how selective Gosplan was in its decision to demolish or sustain building structures. A photo shows a four-storied school built by Barsch and G.A Zundblat (1930s) with a much older brick building butted right in front of it (fig. 59). The smaller brick home is so close to the school that it obscures the windows and view. There are no particular architectural features that would save this building from demolition; in fact it is undeniably ugly. Yet it stands while more significant cultural monuments were removed. An early photo shows the unremarkable building and in the background, the spires and cupola of a

[424] Wells, *Russia in the Shadows*, http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks06/0602371h.html#chap06.

[425] The systematic removal of the church from socialist life is evidenced by the prohibition to bring in icons into commune housing. For more on the culture war, see: Paperny, *Architecture in the Age of Stalin. Culture Two*, 124-125.

church rise above it. While the dreary brick building was left standing, the church was demolished for the construction of the school (fig. 60).[426] Today, the brick building is no longer there, and the school is obscured by trees, set away from the street.

Across from the Lenin Library on Vozdvizhinka 6 stands the former Sheremetev Palace built at the end of the 18th century but then concealed by a hospital built in the Constructivist style by N.V Gofman–Pilaev in 1930 (fig. 61). One can see in the old photo a neo-classical facade with a dramatic gateway. As it appears today, the hospital hides the former palace within the courtyard, like a hostage (fig. 62).[427]

Other notable examples of subtraction include *Krasnye Varota*, the triumphal arch built in the 18th century to commemorate the coronation of Elizabeth Petrovana and the church that stood nearby. Both were taken down for the *Krasnye Varota* metro line and station designed by Ladovskii (figs. 63, 64).[428] The square is vast and it hardly necessitated the demolition of the church and triumphal arch, but the two ideological features of the tsarist regime could hardly be ignored. Benjamin noted, "The subject of the tsars was surrounded in this city [Moscow] by more than four hundred chapels and churches, which is to say by two thousand domes, which hide in the corners everywhere,

[426] According to Ragozina, the librarianat Shchusev Architecture Museum in Moscow.

[427] Old photo from Shchusev archives, also see: Fedocuyk, *Moskva v koltse sadovih*, 105.

[428] Ot Prechistenskih do Arbatskih vorot, *Moskva kotoroi net* p*ytevoditel*' (From Prestichenskih to Arbat Gates. Moscow that is no longer there, a guide) ed. A. V. Krupchanskii (Mosva: Memories, 2010), 87. The book confirms that taking down some of the churches was not necessary for the construction of the metro.

cover one another, spy over walls." [429] Given that their function became utterly superfluous in the new reconstruction of life, it is a wonder that any of them survived.

Why is it that some of the churches were left in place while others were taken down? The argument was made that the construction of the metro required the removal of cathedrals and churches. Churches are difficult to repurpose and that may have been the best rationale to demolition them, apart from the ideological message their destruction conveyed. Consider the experience of the city dweller who may have attended services at one of the churches that then became a metro station. The city dweller may have entered the lofty and mystical space of the church to pray, only to find herself descending into the "pits of hell" of the metro, a decade later. One cannot imagine that such a change in behavior would not be felt by the urbanite. Consider too, repurposing of noblemen's estates for worker clubs or clinics. Duhamel documented in his 1927 *Le Voyage de Moscou,* "How can one not dream in a country where the State seized all for redistribution? How does one not dream where each house one enters to eat, sleep or assemble still carries traces, sometimes secretly, the name of yesterday's owner?"[430]

While the worker class may have taken delight in the redistribution of property, they may have felt attached to public monuments that were taken down, such as the triumphal *Krasnye Varota.* According to Lynch's *The Image of the City*, the city dwellers

[429] Benjamin, "Moscow," 126.

[430] Duhamel, *Le Voyage du Moscou,* 59. Also, Anatolii Kopp, *Architecture et urbanism sovietiques des annees vingt: ville et revolution,* 43. Engels criticized this form of forced redistribution as it did not fit into a true Marxist timeline and natural progression of a proletarian overthrow.

had a pathological attachment to anything that survived drastic changes to the city—exhibiting a sentimentality to the old features of the city, even decaying ones.[431]

Haussmann's memoir confirms the habituation of inhabitants and their preference for stability. Retrospectively, he recalls his error:

> In the eyes of the Parisians, who like routine in things but are changeable when it comes to people, I committed two great wrongs: Over the course of seventeen years, I disturbed their daily habits by turning Paris upside down, and they had to look at the same face of the Prefect in the Hotel de Ville. These were two unforgivable complaints.[432]

Perhaps Rosa Luxemburg, a Marxist theorist, was right when she said, "No matter how dialectically we think, in our immediate state of consciousness we are all incorrigible metaphysicians who cling to the immutability of things." For Moscow city dwellers, or any city dwellers for that matter, immutability was non-existent. One needs only to look at the old photos of Moscow, showing excavated roads throughout the city, for construction of tram lines and eventually for the metro. By 1935, all the houses around the Kremlin were destroyed to increase the Manège Square. An entire district between the Moskva River and Red Square was demolished.[433] Such changes had to be perceptible and psychologically meaningful.

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[431] Lynch, *The Image of the City*, 42.

[432] Haussmann, *Mémoires*, cited in Maneglier, Hervé, *Paris Impérial*, 262.

[433] Anisimov, *Architectural Guide to Moscow*, 8.

Soviet architects understood that forms could impart a psycho-physiological response. Indeed, manipulating human psychology towards consciousness was supported and encouraged by Marxists. After all, one must first gain consciousness before one is able to perceive the material conditions of one's life. According to Vygotskii, Engels said that, "ideology is a result of a false consciousness or no consciousness at all."[434] Any valuable revolutionary transcendence would, therefore, require consciousness. Marxists believed, if naively, that it was possible to transform consciousness.

[434] Vygotskii, "Psihologicheskye problemye v iskusstve " (Psychological Problem in Art), in *Iz Istorii Sovetskoi Estheticheskoi Myesli 1917-32*. Moskva: Iskusstvo. Sos. G. A Belaya, Nauchnii redactor A. E. Gorpenko (Moskva: Issukstvo, 1980), 409. Formalism, translated pages. We are more critical that one can somehow locate true consciousness—a reality without ideology. However, Soviet theorists did believe that capitalism belies true reality and consciousness.

CHAPTER FIVE

Moscow Montage: Viewer Perception

> Insofar as Western culture has deepened its self-awareness through sustained reflection on its accomplishments, the city has tended to become its symbol *par excellence*, and commentary on the city has become the privileged vehicle for the expression of worldviews and ideas of human nature—Françoise Choay[435]

As Moscow became the exemplar of a communist city, or the inchoate example of a communist city, it attracted introspective and forward-thinking intellectuals to see the city and its promises.[436] Documentaries show delegations from England, America, Germany, Austria and France as "Moscow meets foreign visitors on a daily basis."[437] After all, various local and international unions and organizations were invited to participate and contribute on the construction and the progression of a greater Moscow. The Union of Soviet Architects invited delegates from 26 Soviet regions as well as representatives from Europe and the United States.

The visitors' accounts are available and accessible in published essays, editorials and novels. Apart from editorials in daily newspapers, or trade-related commentaries, common viewer reception is unfortunately hidden in personal exchanges, obscured by the

[435] Choay, *The Rule and the Model: On the Theory of Architecture*, 59.

[436] Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright, Diego Rivera, Isadora Duncan, Walter Benjamin, H.G. Wells and Alfred H. Barr are among the recognizable figures that came to Moscow.

[437] Film archive, 1-2692 II *Moscow II* possible director Tissé as *Moscow I* file 4020-I (one out of two reels) "Mosow with the eyes of a tourist" Ed Tissé is identified as the author/filmmaker. Mikhail Kaufman and I. Kopalina's *Moscow* also show dignitaries from other countries coming to Moscow.

anonymity of time and place. As such, this chapter pieces together the available accounts from newspapers, texts by Benjamin, Duhamel, architect accounts in *Bauwelt* and, lastly, film. The larger portion of the chapter addresses the theoretical underpinnings of theories on perception motivating architects and filmmakers.

Literary Examples

Among the literary reflections of Moscow, poet Vladimir Mayakovskii gives a very favorable impression of the changes that took place over the ten years after the revolution. In his enthusiastic poem "*Avtobusum po Moskve (Moscow By Autobus),*" he wonders how can we not be amazed by the remarkable changes? [438] The poem, translated, asks, "How could crowds not flow to the progressive demonstration?". . . "Who does not remember," he asks, "the corner of Orlikov?"[439] One who, "looks up toward the sky north to south, east to west and the windows of *Gostorg* gleam from the sun. How a poet could not be moved by the changes that flew by minute by minute over the ten years." He speaks of a once abandoned building on Tverskaia—

> Where the screeching wind would blow through broken panes.It was a place one could be murdered at night and now…a telegraph building stands sending notes of love. The Kyznechnii Most [bridge] where buildings now grow…who does not remember the hungry crowd that surrounded the dying horse with Ooohs and

[438]My translation of "Avtobusum po Moskve" is an attempt to capture the spirit, less the literal, word by word translation. His play on homophones or near rhymes would be difficult to translate, nor the point of why I am using this poem as an example. For the Russian version of the poem, see index: 226.

[439] Mayakovskii was released nearly naked at the corner of Orlikov (possibly a reference of his imprisonment at Batyriskii prison on Tverskaia

> Aaahhhs and now a store is in its place for the amazed, Vanya heads with his mouth covered in chocolate from the factory Babaeva.

This chocolate covered face, an element of how good things have become, when hunger and darkness are replaced with decadent satiety and gleaming windows, provides such a positive and ebullient account of the changes taking place in Moscow. There are, of course, less passionate accounts than the one Mayakovskii offered, notably Duhamel's.

Duhamel arrived in Moscow in 1927 to see, like many artists and intellectuals, the effects of the revolution firsthand. Generally speaking, he was more interested in the mood of the Russian people than Moscow to be completely relevant to an architectural dissertation. Nevertheless, his account does offer glimpses of the changes that have been taking place in the city. Interestingly, he, like Benjamin, could not help but see the "Occidental" in Russia. Likewise, he made note of the numerous churches which dotted Moscow's skyline.

He wrote of the new construction taking place in Moscow without enthusiasm, noting that some of the construction merits little mention. He stated discriminately, "They are modest, and aren't worthy of attention." But he added, "when a hundred or so children play next to these severe buildings, all is arranged in lines that appear relaxed." It is a quaint image that reminds the reader that cities are, after all, occupied by people, "Constructivism," he qualifies, "is a rigorous art, without hypocrisy, without vain ornamentation. So that the iron frame appears raw, like a skeleton and that is the logic of its power." For Duhamel, Moscow was better when it reminded him of home, and he

took comfort in locating the familiar within the unfamiliar. Within Constructivism, he saw a certain gracefulness that reminded him of the Eiffel Tower—a monument of pre-Constructivism.[440] Nationalism prevailed in his sober evaluation, as he was critical of the German austerity guiding Russian city planning, citing its influence as a "fallacy."[441]

Before Alfred H. Barr was director of Museum of Modern Art, he was an art historian traveling with his friend Jerre Abbott to Moscow in 1927 to 1928, after his stay in Dessau. During his Moscow sojourn, he stayed with Sergei Tretjakov, in Ginzburg's *Gosstrakh* apartments and had the following to say about the building:

> He lives in one of the four 'modern' buildings in Moscow—an apartment house built in the Corbusier-Gropius style. But only the superficials are modern, for the plumbing, heating, etc. are technically very crude and cheap, a comedy of the strong modern inclination without any technical tradition to satisfy it."[442]

He was harsh about much of Moscow architecture:

> As to the architecture, Moscow seems to have had a particularly severe attack of 'drittes Rococo.' Viennese ideas of 1905 seemed to have been imported indiscriminately. The interior of the large food store opposite our hotel is the frightfullest Art Nouveau I've ever seen and there is also much very bad "Beaux-

[440] Duhamel, *Le Voyage du Moscou* 170-171. Besides translating, I have added punctuation to aid in comprehension.

[441] Duhamel, *Le Voyage du Moscou* 169-70.

[442] Barr, "Russian Diary 1927-28," 13.

> Arts" and Baroque and Rococo importations of the last three centuries. The many churches and monasteries however are very wonderful in tone and picturesque in composition. Of the three or four modern buildings, the telegraph office seems the most pretentious and the worst–a badly studied potpourri in detail though interesting in composition. The apartment where the Tretyakovs live is merely Bauhaus academic. The Mosselprom building is good as an adaptation of factory style to an office building. There is some good steamboat detailing on the Izvestiia [building].[443]

Barr's accounts are not particularly thoughtful or poetic. He documented the various plays he attended nightly, the artists he regularly met, and he often highlighted the Soviet inadequacy in comparison to the Bauhaus. However, he thought and wrote highly of Ginzburg even as he criticized *Gosstrakh* as superficial modernism that appeared like an academic reproduction of Le Corbusier or the Bauhaus. He remarked:

> [Ginzburg] has written an interesting book on the theory of architecture (illustrations are good). He is perhaps the most [illegible] of Russian architects; though his work lacks the boldness of Lissitzky or Tatlin, it is certainly more concerned with actual problems. He did the apartment house where the Tretyakovs live. He showed us photos of his work, gave us back numbers of *Sovetskaia arkhitectura*, 46th periodical published by the "left" architects. In his room he had an excellent maquette for a workers' apartment house and club. He

[443] Barr, "Russian Diary 1927-28," 18. *SA* no. 2 (1928), 41-42 also criticized the telegraph office with a photo of the building crossed out with the caption, "How not to build".

explained why it was that several of the big new buildings are so bad—or at least unfortunate—Izvestiia and Telegraph, etc. These were done by older architects who had only a superficial feeling for the problems of modern design, hence the ludicrous steamboat funnels on Izvestiia and the inert weight of the Lenin Institute.[444]

Shortly before Duhamel, Walter Benjamin visited Moscow in the winter months of 1926-27. He lived in Moscow for two months, subsidized by the Soviet Government. Like the other cities that make up his diaries, he was attempting to provide a factual critique of Moscow "as it is at this very moment." In this picture, "`all factuality is already theory'" and therefore it refrains from any deductive abstraction, any prognostication, and, with certain bounds, even any judgement."[445] Benjamin's description of Moscow is poetic and even romantic, perhaps because he was attempting to solidify a romantic interest.

In his letter to Jula Radt, he conveyed interest in publishing in Russian publications, including *The Soviet Encyclopedia*, finding a dearth of materials on the humanities. For him, Russia was full of possibilities. He noted "Everything is in the process of being built or rebuilt and almost every moment poses very critical

[444] Barr, "Russian Diary 1927-28," 39. As footnote to the text accurately indicates that it would have been *Sovremennaia Arhitektura*, not *Sovestkaia Arhitektura*.

[445] Benjamin's letter to Martin Buber from February 23, 1927 is reprinted in a voluminous collection of letters in *The Correspondences of Walter Benjamin 1910-1940* eds Gershom Scholem and Theodor Adorno (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 313. Among the correspondences that cover Moscow start with letter to Jula Radt from December 26, 1926 to the letter to Martin Buber in July 1927.

questions."[446] Months later, after his return to Berlin, he is disappointed to have his article on Goethe rejected from the *Soviet Encyclopedia*, believing that his views were ultimately too radical for those still interested in standard Marxism.

It is a rarely noted point of Benjamin's diary of Moscow, but quite crucial; he went to Moscow in the winter months, walking the streets at -26 degrees. The winter urged him to write,: "The eye is infinitely busier than the ear. The colors do their utmost against the white." Then, "Nor is there any Western city that, in its vast squares, looks so rurally formless and perpetually sodden from bad weather, thawing snow or rain." And, yet he also offered this mystical description:

> In the suburban streets leading off the broad avenues, peasant huts alternate with Art-Nouveau villas or with the sober facades of eight-story blocks. Snow lies deep, and if all of a sudden silence falls, one can believe oneself in a village in midwinter, deep in the Russian interior. Nostalgia for Moscow is engendered not only by the snow, with its starry luster by night and its flowerlike crystals by day, but also by the sky.[447]

As a theorist of modern cities, Benjamin touched on a valuable insight, often neglected in architectural studies or theories on perception— that is; the city is dramatically altered by

[446] Benjamin, *Correspondences*, 311.

[447] Benjamin, "Moscow," 125.

weather, particularly weather in its extreme.[448] The landscape is significantly different during the winter months, from the barren trees, to the snow-capped roofs, to the behavior of the inhabitants, including their patience.

An anonymous account published in *Bauwelt* Berlin in 1933 confirms the importance of weather as a necessary consideration in the building design and construction. The author noted the irrational plan of a glass palace (*Tzentrosoyuz*) wholly unsuited to the local climate, citing the example of *Gostorg's* nearly all glass façade as equally impractical. Apparently the glass façade

> forces people to move themselves and their work to the shaded side of the building during the summer, while seeking out warm nooks during the winter, provided they manage to survive at all in any one of these offices. The extent to which this affects work efficiency and the possible damage to health, both permanent and temporary, caused by all this, has not been entirely overlooked. [449]

The language of the commentary suggests an informed viewer, perhaps an architect. The author further observed:

> Apart from the heap of rubble marking the spot where once stood a proud cathedral with nobody having the faintest notion of what will be built in its place . . . . among the other wounds that have become a blighting feature of the urban

[448] At times, we read complaints about cold and heat the glass windows of modernist buildings generate. See complaints of *Tsentrosoyuz* and *Gostorg* and the change in behavior over the different seasons.

[449] In Lissitzky, *Russia: An Architecture for World Revolution,* 223-224.

> landscape of the capital in the last years, the Muscovite may now add another eyesore—the construction site of the new administrative complex on outer Miassnitskaia [Meat Street]. [450]

The author had a firm opinion on both the personal dwelling and the surrounding area. His precise critique continues with even more flair, "the reinforced concrete skeleton of Le Corbusier's design was left unfinished for two years, and the gloomy formwork with its protruding rust steel reinforcing was left staring into the sky along the busy street while the people prayed for sanity."[451]

Texts and interviews do point to an interest in weather and lighting conditions. In the third issue of *Sovremennaia Arhitektura* from 1929, the editor interviewed Ivan Leonidov, arguably the more poetic and theoretical of the architects.[452] The highlights of the exchange include: "Editor: Do you consider the influence of light on the organism with your glass walls in Baku, where people hide from the sun? Leonidov: Climate situations, of course, have to influence the organization of the walls, and one cannot transport to Baku what is done in Moscow." Leonidov is asked how different forms can meet different needs, to which he replied. "This kind of question belongs there where they work on idealistic architecture, 'like an art form,' but for us form is a result of

[450] In Lissitzky, *Russia: An Architecture for World Revolution*, 223-224.

[451] Quotes come from Lissitzky, *Russia: An Architecture for World Revolution*, 223-224.

[452] Ivan Leonidov's style while admired by many was also decried for being too utopian. In 1930 Mordvinov published the harmful nature of Leonidov's work, calling it poisonous/harmful. See: Anderson's discussion of Arkadii Grigor'evich Mordvinov, "Leonidovshchina i ee vred," *Iskusstvo v massy*, no. 12 (1930): 12-15, in "The Future of History: The Cultural Politics of Soviet Architecture, 1928-41."

organization and functional interaction of workers. We must look and critique not form, but the method of cultural organization." In response, the editor asked, "What is this, a novel or a project?" Leonidov responded, "This depends on understanding: for whom Soviet power is not power, but a novel." A little further into the conversation, the editor probed, "Do you consider the influence of light on the human psyche?" To which Leonidov replied, "Light, undoubtedly influences the human psyche, and the main questions hinges on ending unconscious play with light and focus on the scientific approach to light." The editor continued, "What constitutes for you human emotions?" Leonidov explained, "Emotions, feelings cannot be scientifically analyzed, and organizing emotions and feelings, is—first of all—is the organization of your consciousness." Now the interview takes an interesting turn. The editor asked, "Not counting music, what should one listen to on the radio?" Leonidov's replied: "Life."[453]

Toward the end of the interview, the editor posed the question, "Do you think it is necessary to organize viewer's impressions?" Leonidov responded: "The thing is not organizing viewer's impressions, but generally organizing consciousness." The editor asks the final question: "What do you think of the meaning of theater and film without the artist?" Leonidov responds, "I reject theater emphatically, as having outlived its cultural role….Film without actors, as a technology, of course I support, but I do consider that one must organize it according to the methods of Constructivism, but not without

[453] It would not be unusual to hear a broadcast of "walking through Moscow" at the time. Mayakovskii has a poem titled "Aftobasum po Moskve" (1927).

acting, like for example, Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* and his own socially thoughtless display of life."[454]

Moscow on Film

Film was still a novelty in the 1920s and 1930s and was viewed to have tremendous potential to educate viewers according to Lenin and Benjamin. Lenin's enthusiasm for cinema and the forthcoming *cinefication* (akin to industrialization) led to numerous theories and inquiries about the medium of film and its potential to educate and transform the proletariat. [455] Trotsky astutely argued that the only thing that could compete with the church or the tavern as a place for social gathering was the cinema, and as an instrument, must be secured at all costs.[456]

Apart from its ability to educate, film also crystallized many theories of perception that were held in the 1920s and 1930s. Theorist and formalist, Boris Eikhenbaum understood that, "the cinema audience is placed in completely new conditions of perception," which required the audience to construct its own internal

[454] The entire interview is printed in "Voprossi, zadanye po doklady tov. Leonidova na I S'esze OSA, e otvetye na nix tov. Leonidova, " *Sovremennaia Arhitektura* 3 (1929): 110-111. While Leonidov does not elaborate on his distaste of Dziga Vertov, Leyda states in Kino that Vertov's position and manifestoes caused significant antagonism and resentment. See: Leyda, *Kino: A History of the Russian and Soviet Film*, 177. Vertov and Eisenstein were critical of each other's methods of showing life as it really was.

[455]Vance Kepley Jr., "'Cinefication': Soviet Film Exhibition in the 1920s" *Film History*, Vol. 6, No. 2, (Summer, 1994): 262.

[456] Leon Trotsky, *Problems of Everyday Life and Other Writings on Culture and Science*, (New York, Monad Press, 1973.), 35.

speech.[457] It was, according him, a special photographic language that unreels in time, and requires a complex mental task that negotiates a constant tension between language and the subconscious.[458]

Likewise, film is a distillation of external observations, one that can offer a narrative of the way a city may be perceived. There is something to be said about the number of films which focused on the city as the main protagonist, from Paul Strand's and Charles Sheeler's *Manhatta* (1921), Walter Ruttmann's *Symphony of a Great City* (1927) to Mikhail Kaufman and I. Kopalina's *Moscow* (1927), Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) to André Sauvage's *Études sur Paris* (1928). They share common themes of the country and city divide, an interest in technology and a fascination with movement; trams, busses, trains, bicycles, horse carriages, airplane and even carousels feature prominently in these films. Perhaps the best part of Mikhail Kaufman and I. Kopalina's *Moscow* is the section on "life pulsating" when the film becomes more a study of rhythm in an otherwise straightforward propaganda film.[459]

Paul Strand and Scheeler's *Manhatta* (1921) is the first of its kind to see the city as a breathing entity, with its numerous skyscrapers billowing smoke like heavy fat capitalists smoking cigars. Before Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin*, *Manhatta* wages a

[457] Boris Eikhenbaum, "Literature and Cinema" (1926), reprinted in *Russian Formalism: A Collection of Article and Texts in Translation*, eds. Stephen Bann, and John Bowlt trans, Richard Sherwood (Edinburg: Scottish Academic Press, 1973), 123. The collection includes several articles on film by notable Formalists.

[458] Eikhenbaum, "Literature and Cinema," 125.

[459] Kaufman actually films a short segment in 1933 on the new trolleybus.

war of worker tugboats against cruise-line ships. Unlike the Soviet filmmakers who were far more explicit in their proletarian struggle, it is difficult not to see the implications in *Manhatta* as a "site" of workers' ideology.

The director and film critic Noël Burch likened the cinematic approach to the staging of a scene, or the *mise-en-scène* as a suitable parallel for the design of space in the city. He says, "Take any empty space and call it a bare stage. An actor moves across this space while someone is watching and a piece of theater is engaged."[460] Natal Altman and Lissitzky saw the stage-like aspect of Moscow with the city dwellers as performers, especially so, with various demonstrations and reenactments taking place in Moscow after the revolution. The space in the city, like the on-screen space, is but an excerpt to a wider context or story. [461] Therefore, regardless of the space, even a parking lot or a market, is a space in a larger context; one scene and one space is a sequence of other frames and spaces.

Benjamin thought the best way to perceive the labyrinth effect of Moscow was with the guidance of film:

> The whole exciting sequence of topographical dummies that deceives [he or she or any tourist] could only be shown by a film: the city is on its guard against him, masks itself, flees, intrigues, lures him to wander its circles to the point of

[460] Noël Burch is quoted in *Public Space: The Familiar into the Strange* ed. Helle Juul, trans. Dan A. Marmorstein (Copenhagen: Arkitekturforlaget B, 2012), 46.

[461] Juul, *Public Space: The familiar into the Strange*, 46

> exhaustion. This could be approached in a very practical way; during the tourist season in great cities, 'orientation films' would run for foreigners.[462]

Ultimately though, he conceded that, "maps and plans are victorious; in bed at night, imagination juggles with real buildings, parks and streets."[463]

Prior to the now famous *Man with a Movie Camera*, Vertov's brother Mikhail Kaufman and I. Kopalina filmed what is surely the precursor to *Man with a Movie Camera*. Their work, *Moscow* filmed in 1927 details the life of a city from its "waking stage," to its "going to work stage," to its "pulsating life stage" and finally to its "leisure and close of the day" stage. Kaufman and Kopalina focus largely on the positive aspects of life in Moscow, showing the new tramlines laid in the workers' neighborhoods and the building of new apartments. A few minutes are spent on childhood homelessness and vestiges of old bourgeois culture, which is contrasted by the workers reading in the workers club, exercising and playing instruments.

Moscow is far less inventive than *Man with a Movie Camera*. Kaufman and Kopalina employ dialectical materialism in the most obvious of ways with straightforward sequence of scenes typifying decadence followed by workers sitting in a workers club. *Man with a Movie Camera*, however uses montage as a means of demonstrating dialectical materialism. The contrast is not narrative-based, but created with the measured editing eye. Even by *Spring* (1929) Kaufman shows greater

[462] Benjamin, "Moscow," 99.

[463] Benjamin, "Moscow," 99.

sophistication and increased use of montage. Film critics and filmmakers celebrated montage for its dynamic nature or as "dynamic painting," in exposing the true nature of film as a juxtaposition of stills in a sequence of time.

Speaking in Paris in 1929, Vertov explained his method: "The history of Kino-Eye has been a relentless struggle to modify the course of world cinema, to place in cinema production a new emphasis of the 'unplayed' film over the play-film, to substitute the document for mise-en-scène, to break out of the proscenium of the theater and to enter the arena of life itself."[464] Vertov and his brother Mikhail were dedicated to show "life unaware." To accomplish this, they carried concealed cameras as they went to markets, pioneer camps, etc. Invested in the dialectical devices such as montage, but also in the area of interest, Kino-Eye, Vertov and his brother wanted to focus on a series that examined: the new and the old; children and adults; the co-operative and the open market and the city and the country, followed by the theme on bread, meat and vice versus health.[465] These contrasts are identifiable in *Man with a Movie Camera* and speak to a more general approach to dialectic materialism.

The poet and critic Ippolit Sokolov wrote in *Kino Fot*, "Our dialectical psyche moves towards the future only on the sharp angles of our present age." He elaborated, "The geometric beauty of the century is in the lines and angles of our material construction. The nature of our contemporary life is expressed by the nature of film.

[464]Vertov is quoted in Jay Leyda's *Kino: A History of the Russian and Soviet Film* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 176.

[465] Leyda, *Kino: A History of the Russian and Soviet Film*, 178.

Film alone is constructed solely on straight lines and sharp angles."[466] The parallels to architecture are obvious and have been pointed out by no other than Le Corbusier, who actually met Sergei Eisenstein in Moscow. Le Corbusier praised Eisenstein's work, in so far as he saw similarity in their approach. He proposed in *Sovetskii Ékran*, "Architecture and the cinema are the only two arts of our time. In my own work I seem to think as Eisenstein does in his films. His work is shot through with the sense of truth and bears witness to the truth alone. His films resemble closely what I am trying to do in my own work." [467] In the 1920s, film critics were enthusiastic about the collaboration between film and architecture as the best way to show life as true and authentic as possible.[468] Ladovskii, for example, used film at VKhUTEIN for instructional purposes, stating:

> In 1929/1930, I developed and used the principle of a new, more up-to-date method of project representation, a method that takes into account the organization of time-film projection. This method is especially important for an urban planner, who has to convey to others (and, first of all, to test himself) the organization of space in time. In this respect, no contemporary representation methods can compete with film projection.[469]

[466] Ippolit Sokolov, "Skrilshal' veka" (Weapon of the Age) in *Kino Fot* No. 1 (1922): 1. This is the first publication of the journal that came out weekly. Editor: Aleksei Gan. The journal included essays by Dziga Vertov and Lev Kuleshov.

[467] Cohen, *Mystique of the USSR*, 49, and *Sovetskii Ekran*, no. 46 (13 November 1928): 5.

[468] Paperny, *Architecture in the Age of Stalin: Culture Two*, 211.

[469] Nikolai Ladovskii, "Planirovka Avtostroia i Magnitogorska" (The Planning of Avtostroi and Magnitogorsk), *Sovetskaia arkhitektura* no. 1-2 **(**1931): 21.

Andrei Burov, who worked with Eisenstein, built the set for his film The *Old and the New* (1927) by literally building a building. Burov noted, "as one of the creators of the awareness and forms of a new way of life . . . dwelling . . . should form a complex of elements indissolubly tied together . . . I see [in the cinema] above all an excellent means of spreading among the masses the great ideas of our time."[470]

The House on Trubnaya, written by aforementioned Formalist, Viktor Shklovsky, and directed by Boris Barnet in 1928 is strikingly similar to Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* suggesting the popularity of what the city might expose to the viewers about their daily life. The film relies more on traditional narrative structure, unlike Vertov's symphony of the city or Ruttmann's "Symphony of the Great City." One could describe the film as synthesis between Abram Room's *Bed and Sofa* (1927) and *Man with a Movie Camera*. The film begins with street scenes and a house, as the inter-title states, "asleep." The inter-title follows with, "the city awakes" and the viewer sees the streets being cleaned. Again, the viewer is made aware of the sleep-state versus being awake-inaction, versus action, awareness versus unawareness—precisely the struggle of revolutionary raison d'être.[471]

[470]Burov is quoted in *Building in the USSR*, 117-118. Original source TSGALI f. 1928, op.1, d. 21, 1-2. We know of the close relationship among the architects and filmmakers. El Lissitzky and Malevich both new Dziga Vertov and Eisenstein. And we know they informed each other. Eisenstein even wrote on architecture, having once been an engineering student.

[471] I want to remind the reader that the metaphor of a city asleep is equated with an obscured state of collective unconsciousness, a result of commodity fetishism. Marxists believed that the dialectical method would lead to a historical awakening.

The viewer is then introduced to a young woman, Paranya, who leaves the country for Moscow. The immigrant or peasant worker arriving to the city is a common trope, seen also in the 1934 sound film *The Private Life of Pyotr Vinogradov*.[472] Kaufman's *Moscow* also shows people from distant republics are playing chess together and "peasants come to Moscow from far and wide."[473]Harald Hals once said at the First Congress of Soviet Architects in 1937, "I have heard that you have here a saying about Moscow – in the Soviet Union there are three classes of people: (1) those who are living in Moscow; (2) those on the road to Moscow; (3) and those hoping to end up in Moscow."[474]

Paranya's journey is punctuated by the speed of passing power-lines—reminding the viewer of the electrification that was taking place in Russia. The young woman's progress is conflated with the progress of the USSR. She arrives at what looks like *Krasnye Vorota* and begins to search for her uncle in the streets and crowds of Moscow, much in the same way that Pyotr does in *The Private Life of Pyotr Vinogradov*. The city is a confusing labyrinth and she spins as if to indicate she is lost in the city. When she finally locates her uncle's apartment, he has moved. Now she must go look for him, while taking care that her pet duck does not get killed by the trams. This delicate creature is a remnant of peasant life and it struggles to survive in the city—the perfect gesture of the country and city divide!

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[472] Paul Strand and Scheeler's *Manhatta* shows a barge full of workers arriving to Manhattan (1921).

[473] Mikhail Kaufman and I. Plonikova's *Moscow*, (1927). 43 minutes in.

[474] Harald Hals stated such in his address to at the First Congress of Soviet Architects in 1934. See Paperny, *Architecture in the Age of Stalin: Culture Two*, 53-54.

While Paranya shows us the struggles of the peasant coming to Moscow, the viewer also sees the remnants of bourgeois life as another female lazily eschews work for sleep. Paranya comes to work for the bourgeois female only because she is a "virgin" and has not yet entered a "union"— that is— a worker's union. As to be expected, she is exploited until a woman, Eufemia, (a bearer of good words) comes to enlist her to join Profsouz and invites her to the workers' club's theatrical performance. Eventually she is able to go to the performance and becomes so enthralled by the production of "*Taking of the Bastille*" to confuse reality with make-believe. The acting was apparently so convincing that she climbs on stage and begins to hit the general, who unbeknownst to her is her boss. She clobbers him, believing him to be a general, but the viewer also knows that she is actually beating her boss. It is no surprise that he will fire her.

The loss of her job leads Paranya to finally join the union. We then see her return to where she worked, and to the house on Trubnaya, which is being "cleaned up" for her arrival. The inhabitants of the house create a charade, pretending to be members of Mossovet, though one can see it is merely for show. As a comedy, it manages to amuse, but the message suggested is as sophisticated as the one in *Man with a Movie Camera*— artifice and awareness. Stage performances are mistaken to be real and real life is full of pretenders and fakes. One cannot help but think of Ginzburg's comments to Barr about the architects posing to be modern while still holding on to their original pre-revolutionary ideologies or methodologies.

Finally, we must consider the architectural wonders of Moscow as shown in Aleksander Medvedkin's *Novaya Moskva* (1938). The film is not well-known. After it was made, it was banned for "ideological reasons," leading some to speculate that the future vision of Moscow was soulless and inhumane and therefore not appropriate.[475] It is true that the film offers an ambiguous vision of contemporary life in Moscow and of its future.

Novaya Moskva takes *The House on Trubnaya* and demystifies the peasant experience of living in a city. [476] The opening takes place in a village with the villagers working on a maquette. Alyosha, the main character and an engineer is leaving the village to help build Moscow. Like other characters before him, he arrives by train. While on the train, his grandmother must explain to the passengers who look upon Alyosha's maquette with amazement, that such things are not magic or utopian; they are real, yes, even as real as electro-hydro power, science and chemistry are real.

Novaya Moskva was intended to be a slapstick comedy and shared many of the same cinematic techniques with *The Private Life of Pyotr Vinogradov* and *The House on Trubnaya*. While the montage sequences between the city streets and the audience who look at amazement recall Vertov's audience in *Man with a Movie Camera*. Time lapse gives the appearance that the buildings in New Moscow are built literally in seconds to the applause heard in the background. In one of the sequences, an artist is painting a

[475] Emma Widdis, *Aleksander Medvedkin* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 104. The film was shown but to a selective audience in 1939.

[476] Aloysha brings with him a girl from the village who brings along a piglet, as Paranya brought her pet duck to the city.

cityscape of Moscow and remarks how quickly things are changing; he barely has time to finish painting. To underscore this point, the viewer sees the grandma's sister's home demolished right before her eyes, followed by a sequence of several buildings getting demolished. The artist and the grandmother feel as though they have no solid ground, as everything is always moving and changing. There is even a point where it appears that the house where grandmother is staying is moving or the city is actually moving. The character phones information and asks, "Where is Moscow going?" while grandmother proposes, "Maybe they're just moving your room?" A neighbor then informs them they are in fact moving their house, and moving another house into its place.

The yet-to-be-built Moscow panoramas shown in the film, recall Mel'nikov's architecture, while the animated rendition of the city appears fantastically ideal (fig. 65).[477] In the "ideal city," a cartoon model of the subway dissects the city plans. Peasant villages are turned into Claude Lorraine-like vistas with Stalinist building types. Churches are replaced with large magisterial roads. The film within the film shows the drawing of *Palace of the Soviets* on what is to be the new Prospekt Lenina.

While there is uncertainty as to precisely why the film was ideologically questionable, it has been suggested that the destruction old Moscow for New Moscow may have implied a collapse of a socialist Utopia.[478] The scenes in question occur when the film within the film accidently plays backwards to show the many monuments

[477] D.D. Bulgakov was the architect who contributed to the film.

[478] Widdis, *Aleksander Medvedkin*, 110.

destroyed for New Moscow. The audience in the film is laughing at the snafu and do not appear to sigh with any regret. However, the actual audience may have been unnerved by scenes of destruction, and the reminder of their need to adapt to a city constantly in transition. On the heels of war, uncertainty carried with it a greater sense of foreboding.

Art as Life, Life as Art

"A landscape built of pure life."[479]

Lenin, with the aid of Lunacharskii, encouraged the transformation of Moscow early on, initiating the constructing of monuments to socialism. These gestures spoke to the importance of transforming Moscow into a socialist spectacle. Parades and reenactments of the revolution further transformed the banality of the everyday. As the architectural historian Andrei Ikonnikov has pointed out,

> The revival of town-planning ideas was to a large extent stimulated by festive events when the city was decorated like a huge stage to express the `main idea,' a sort of scenography for a huge artistic production. In the process, the city was transformed in large areas and sometimes in its totality. Colour became a chief means for `camouflaging' the city's everyday appearance and transforming the habitual surroundings. [480]

It is worthwhile to consider then the "props," that is architecture, that became the mise-en-scène to the narrative of socialist life.

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[479] Hugo von Hofmannsthal remark on Paris and the the meaning to every house in Paris. From Benjamin's *Arcades Project*, 83. Ancient Paris, Catacomb, Demolitions, Decline of Paris.

[480]Ikonnikov, *Russian Architecture of the Soviet Period* , 93-94.

Bolshevik spectacles and parades transformed, "The whole city [as] the stage and the entire proletarian masses of Moscow the performers."[481] Gan envisioned numerous stagings in and around Moscow which would come to life with factory sirens, prompting city "actors" to perform their duties on the so called stage of Moscow.[482] Ikonnikov elaborates, "In the process, spatial art was combined with temporal—a scenography of mass action. The genre borderline disappeared between temporary monuments materializing into events accompanied by ceremonies and the spontaneous response of the masses…."[483] This description confirms what Gan and many other revolutionary agitators saw, that Moscow is THE mise-en-scène, with everyday props and city-dweller actors that challenged the bourgeois urban scene. Duhamel, on his visit to Moscow in 1927, remarked, "The Russian people appear like actors" who act according to a manuscript. [484] When city-dweller "actors" participated in parades or reenactments, they *were* like the actors in *Man with a Movie Camera* with the city as their backdrop. However, the actors in *Man with a Movie Camera* were the real-deal city dwellers and not actual actors.

Vertov and his brother wanted to "catch life unaware" whereby regular people were the actors and the stage was the city. The real versus artificial was after all a

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[481] Narkompros,*Vestnik Teatr* (Theater Journal) no 51, (1920): 5-8, cited in *Radical Street Performance: An International Anthology* ed. Jan Cohen-Cruz (London: Routledge, 1998), 19.

[482] Cooke, *Russian Avant-Garde: Theories of Art, Architecture and the City*, 24.

[483] Iknonnikov, *Russian Architecture of the Soviet Period*, 93.

[484] Duhamel, *Le Voyage du Moscou*, 142.

challenge for Marxists. In *Man with a Movie Camera,* after the initial audience and orchestra scene, the city of Moscow is shown in a state of slumber; humans, dogs, shops, factories are sleeping. Although Vertov intended to show a single day in the city, from the early hours of the day to the nighttime, the theme of awakening from a slumber was a popular motif in Marxist inspired literature and theory in the likes of André Breton and Benjamin and should be understood to signify more than a mere representation of a literal passage of time.

Among the more popular conceptions of the city during the interwar period was that of a dreamscape wherein one must decipher the city as one would a dream, a space that one never fully understands but merely grasps the outlines.[485] As a reader of the city, one is perhaps dulled by habituation and therefore oblivious to the reality of the city as it actually is. A city that is both a product of habituation and flux leaves the inhabitant of the city ultimately disassociated from their environment. The danger, as Marx understood, is our passivity and disenfranchisement from the economic and political reality that is, in front of our face. Consider the metaphor of the shop windows shown both in *Man with a Movie Camera* and *Études sur Paris* wherein the female street viewer confronts the artifice of the mannequins. She identifies with their human-like appearance, and at the same time feels removed from their artificiality. The glass serves as a mirror to the inauthenticity within.

[485] Reeh, *Ornaments of the Metropolis: Siegfried Kracauer and Modern Urban Culture*, 113.

Among the more influential contributors to film theory was Lev Kuleshov, a pre-revolutionary set designer, turned filmmaker, who not only managed to stay current, but even progressive in his theories after the revolution. Though Kuleshov remains obscure outside of film studies, his theories on montage, documented in avant-garde publications like *Kino Fot*, were instrumental to filmmakers like Sergei Eisenstein, Vsevolod Pudovkin (who worked on the experiments with Kuleshov) and Dziga Vertov who popularized the technique.[486] In a foreword to Kuleshov's book *Art of the Cinema*, Pudovkin, writes, "The establishment of our cinema developed from Kuleshov . . . . We make films—Kuleshov made cinematography."[487] Kuleshov humbly estimated, as of 1974, that over half of Soviet directors were once his students, including Eisenstein who took a three-month workshop from him.[488]

Today, Kuleshov's feature-length films do not garner the same respect or awe that Eisenstein's or Vertov's films enjoy. Instead it is Kuleshov's film experiments and theories which have earned him the recognition he deserves. Though most of his experimental footage was destroyed during World War II, scholars are able to reconstruct them from notes, memories and a few select scenes which were recently discovered.[489] The experiment he is best known for was filmed in 1921 and has been subsequently

[486] Steven Kovas, "Kuleshov's Aesthetics," in *Film Quarterly*, no. 3 (Spring, 1976): 34-40.

[487] Vsevolod Pudovkin, Obolenski, Komarov and Fogel in the "Foreward" in *Art of the Cinema* included in *Kuleshov on Film: writings by Lev Kuleshov*. Selected, translated and edited by Ronald Levaco (Berkley: University of California Press, 1974).

[488] Kuleshov, *Kuleshov on Film: writings by Lev Kuleshov*, 1.

[489] See, Tsivian's discussion of *Man with a Movie Camera* as an extra feature of the remastered film.

labeled as "The Kuleshov Effect." Kuleshov took existing film footage of Ivan Mozzhukhin, a film heartthrob, and intercut his stoic face with a bowl of soup, then juxtaposed the same footage of the heartthrob's face against a frame of a child in a coffin, then similarly with a woman.

Though the footage of the face was one and the same, the juxtaposition against the various frames led his test audience to perceive the actor's face as responding emotionally to the juxtaposed images. Pudovkin described how the audience "raved about the acting . . . the heavy pensiveness of his mood over the forgotten soup, [how they] were touched and moved by the deep sorrow with which he looked on the dead child, and noted the lust with which he observed the woman. But we knew that in all three cases the face was exactly the same."[490] This experiment came to denote the relationship of the shot to shot that was fundamentally more important than the actor's performance. Kuleshov concluded, "We came to realize that the source of filmic impact upon the viewer lies within the system of alternating shots, which comprise the motion picture."[491] He referred to this alternation of shots as *montage* and announced it as the basis of cinematography. He likened montage to the linguistic construction of phrases, saying, "A poet uses one word after another, in a definite rhythm, as one brick after another.

[490] Vsevolod Pudovkin, "Naturshchik vmesto aktera" (Non actor in place of actor), in *Sobranie sochinenii* (Collection of Essays), volume I, (Moscow: 1974), 184. Pudovkin's account may also be found in his *Film Technique and Film Acting* (Vision London, 1954), 140.

[491] Kuleshov, *Kuleshov on Film: writings by Lev Kuleshov*, 47.

Cemented by him, the word-images produce a complex conception as a result."[492] Parallel this with Ginzburg who argued in his *Rhythm and Architecture*:

> No matter what science we turn to, what life process we come to, we shall everywhere see the manifestations of rhythm. All scientific hypotheses, laws, and philosophical attitudes are nothing other than aspirations to seek formulas and determinations expressing the rhythmic pulse of the cosmos. The same applies to man's inner world—the function of the lungs and heart, the movement of arms and legs are subjected to the laws of rhythm which are elements of psycho-physical nature.[493]

There was even an Institute for Rhythmic Education that led various experiments in rhythm.[494]

Kuleshov continued with experiments to prove that montage had a profound influence on the semantic comprehension of what appears on the screen.[495] In the *Created Surface of the Earth*, filmed in March of 1921, Kuleshov films a series of shots of a woman near the Gogol monument in Moscow, and a series of shots of a man near the Moscow River. The subsequent frames shows them meeting up and shaking hands in yet

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[492] Kuleshov, *Kuleshov on Film: writings by Lev Kuleshov*, 91.

[493] Ginzburg, *Rhythm and Architecture*," 9. Also in Senkevich, *Trends in Soviet Architectural Thought, 1917-32: The Growth and Decline of the Constructivist and Rationalist Movements*, 152.

[494] See footnote 40 in Senkevich, *Trends in Soviet Architectural Thought, 1917-32: The Growth and Decline of the Constructivist and Rationalist Movements*, 152.

[495] Kuleshov, *Kuleshov on Film: writings by Lev Kuleshov*, 192.

another location (fig. 66). They both look into the distance. The following shots, which no longer exist, are those of the United States Capital, cut with the next frame of the couple walking up the staircase of the *Cathedral of Christ the Savior*, which once stood in Moscow before being torn down in 1931.[496] Kuleshov describes the ingenuity of his "creative geography" and the scene:

> We film them, edit the film and the result is that they are seen walking up the steps of the White House [it is, actually, the Capital]. For this we used no trick, no double exposure; the effect was achieved solely by the organization of the material through its cinematic treatment. This particular scene demonstrated the incredible potency of montage, which actually appeared so powerful that it was able to alter the very essence of the material for this scene, we came to understand that the basic strength of cinema lies in montage because with montage it becomes possible both to breakdown and to reconstruct and ultimately to remake the material.[497]

At a time when Russia was experiencing economic hardships, montage also proved to be more cost effective and efficient. It allowed Soviet filmmakers to overcome budget, geographic and material constraints. Kuleshov was intensely concerned with what he believed to be an artistic economic experiment. S. Elin, a cinematographer

[496] Aleksandera Khokhova, the actress recounts the sequences in her diary from 1921 and states that the steps were that of the Museum of Fine Art. Kuleshov, writes and Kokhlova, Tsivian and Thompson support that the shot of the stairs was filmed on the steps of the *Cathedral of Christ the Savior*.

[497] Kuleshov, *Kuleshov on Film: writings by Lev Kuleshov*, 192.

acknowledged in 1922, "Production requires hundreds of thousands of dollars, but we're poor."[498] In agreement, filmmakers, architects and artists advocated a streamlined aesthetic under general terms such as "constructivism," "rationalism," and "productivism." Naturally, this meant a rejection of superfluous details both in Kuleshov's aesthetic theory and architecture. Aleksander Vesnin wrote in *The Artist's Objectives*, "The object created by the contemporary artist should be a pure construction, without the weight of décor, built on the principle of the geometric line and curve, and on the principle of economy of means for a maximum effect."[499] Kuleshov too preferred to film modern technological objects, citing their linear simplicity made them more readily recognizable, and therefore more conducive to cinema—as a simple object can be apprehended quicker.[500] Montage, he asserted, further facilitates efficiency by focusing the viewer's attention on the essential relationship between the frames. He explained his views:

> Setting a frame around particular qualities always implies a focus on something in favor of something else. When dynamic urban space is being planned, other areas in the city can be mentally interpolated as potential areas that will render the place dynamic and infuse energy. With this, the place's existing relations and

[498] S. Elin, "Po povodu dekreta," *Kino Fot* no. 6 (1923): 7.

[499] Khan-Magomedov, *Aleksander Vesnin and Russian Constructivism*, 88.

[500] Kovas, "Kuleshov's Aesthetics," 35-36.

connections are implemented on site, with the result that the place-identity becomes more porous and more adaptable to change.[501]

Dialectical materialism exemplified by tension and struggle was perhaps the easiest to understand and communicate and it served as a template for montage theory and architectural theory. Le Corbusier, who met Sergei Eisenstein in Russia, was very complimentary of Eisenstein's work, in so far as he saw similarity in their approach. He writes in *Sovetskii Ekran*, "Architecture and the cinema are the only two arts of our time. In my own work I see to think as Eisenstein does in his films. His work is shot through with the sense of truth, and bears witness to the truth alone. In their ideas, his films resemble closely what I am trying to do in my own work."[502]

Aleksander Vesnin believed that no matter the object, the artist should also think of the organizational effect of that creation on human consciousness as well as "a consciousness of modernity, rhythm, and conformity of materials." Moreover, "Some objects have an organizing effect on the awareness, others have a weakening effect, and often objects have a *physiological effect that stimulates energy and force*."[503] Vesnin and avant-garde filmmakers believed themselves to be creating objects that accomplished the latter. Ginzburg states in his *Rhythm and Architecture*:

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[501] *Public space*, ideas of Noël Burch, 47.

[502] Cohen, *Mystique of the USSR*, 49. *Sovetskii Ekran*, no. 46 (13 November 1928): 5.

[503] Magomedov, *Vesnin*, 87. Emphasis is mine.

> From the moment of its conception to the present day, architecture, in its formal elements, its *fragmentation* and composition of masses, has been inspired only by the laws of *rhythm*, which determine the essence of any work of architecture. The whole history of architecture is essentially the history of various manifestations of these purest dynamic laws."[504]

It goes without saying, Vertov, like Kuleshov and many other Soviet artists believed in the ability of art, architecture and film to transform consciousness.[505] Vygotskii, who wrote *Psychological Problem in Art* stated:

> Engels said that any ideology is a result of a false consciousness or no consciousness at all. The true stimulating forces which move the creator are unknown to him. He invents therefore to himself false or imaginary forces. It is also useless to analyze the feelings of the spectators because they are also hidden in a non-conscious sphere of the psychic.[506]

Bruno Taut also believed that the general public is slumbering, and that architecture would be a means for his or her awakening. Kracauer had noted that, "The cognition of cities is linked to the deciphering of the dreamlike outlines of their images."[507] Consider the clip from *A Man with a Movie Camera* (1928) wherein the

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[504] Ginzburg, *Architecture and Rhythm*, 6 quoted in Senkevich, *Trends in Soviet Architectural Thought, 1917-32: The Growth and Decline of the Constructivist and Rationalist Movements*, 152. Emphasis is mine.

[505] Kovas, "Kuleshov's Aesthetics," 37.

[506] Lev Vygotskii, "Psihologicheskye problemye v iskusstve" (Psychological Problem in Art), 409.

[507] Reeh, *Ornaments of the Metropolis: Siegfried Kracauer and Modern Urban Culture*, 113.

viewer outside and the audience within the film experiences the opening sequence of "Moscow" metaphorically asleep.[508] Soon, the city awakens and the viewer sees a city in commotion as factories produce, people bustle, people are born, they die, etc. The *mise en abyme* created by the audience within the film confronts the actual audience who sees itself seeing itself. Mimesis, in this case, is not used to create an alternative dream reality, but to hold up a mirror to the actual realities of life. Unable to escape, the audience is forced to wake from their ideological slumber.[509]

At their worst, commodity based films, i.e. American films were hero oriented and worse, had the effect of lowering consciousness by offering escapist dream worlds.[510] Stalin, who was a film lover, considered film as, "an illusion, but one that dictates life by its laws."[511] Rather than lull, Agit filmmakers wanted to confront the audience, as Vertov

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[508] The dream sequences followed by a state of awakening may be understood with a reading of Marx and those reading him. Walter Benjamin, for example, believed that the dialectical process would lead to a state of awakening to the material conditions of life. Žižek points out that Freud and Marx both shared the idea of an unveiling that which has been obscured. For Marx, capitalism obscures, or according to Žižek, capitalism obscures the secret of commodity; for Freud, ego and superego obscures the latent desires of the id.

[509] Bill Nichols, "Documentary Film and the Modernist Avant-Garde" in *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 27, no. 4 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 596.

[510] Glavrepertkom banned mostly foreign films and those from the Soviet Republics. The rationale frequently given was that they were "too mindless." In Miller, *Soviet Cinema: Politics and Persuasions Under Stalin*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009), 53-54.

[511] Stalin is quoted in Oksana Bulgakova's "Povelitel' Kartin—Stalin I kino, Stalin v kino," in *Agitatzija za Shchjastja: Sovetskoye Iskusstvo Stalinskii Epohi* (Dusseldorf: Interarteks, 1994), 65. Stalin was very aware of the films that were playing and had even read scripts. It is also well-known that he banned films he deemed "inappropriate." Though Stalin was ultimately the main censor, other organizations including Glavrepertkom, Orgburo and Soviet Studios also played a strong role in censorship. For more on censorship during Stalin's term, see: Miller, *Soviet Cinema: Politics and Persuasions under Stalin*, 54, 59-64.

had attempted to do by showing the audience seeing itself. According to early theorists like Kracauer, Benjamin, Pudovkin and Eisenstein, film engaged not only the brain, but also the whole body.[512] After all, the audience or the pedestrian walking in a stupor, unconscious to the material realities of life needed, or maybe required a jolting![513] This could be achieved in two ways: one, by using mimetic representation, such as showing street scenes, audiences, factories or, two, by montage—where mimesis takes a backseat to the shocking, jarring, fragmented representation of life in modernity.[514]

For Eisenstein, montage was a "collision of ideas" and at its basis, "montage is conflict."[515] Eisenstein rejected Kuleshov's notion of montage as a brick-by-brick linkage, in favor of a theory that sees montage as based on tension, out of which a concept arises. He argued, "As the basis of every art is conflict (an 'imagist' transformation of the dialectical principle)."[516] Anyone who knows some basic Marx or Hegel may recognize Eisenstein's interpretation of montage as inspired by dialectical materialism—which views history as driven by antagonism. Eisenstein's take on

[512] Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality*, 160. See also B. Arvatov "Agit Kino" in *Kino Fot*, no. 2 (1922): 2.

[513] See Benjamin, "Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," 238. It is worthwhile to consider the difference elicited by contemplation versus shock. A presence of mind could surely be achieved a number of ways. Shock does have the potential to lead to a heightened presence of the mind.

[514] Street scenes became the staple of modernist films. Laszlo Moholy-Nagy's script for *Dynamics of a Metropolis* though never realized, includes details such as factories, buildings, traffic in a big city, all set to a montage pace. See Vlada Petrić's *Constructivism in Film: The Man with a Movie Camera. A Cinematic Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 10.

[515] Sergein Eisenstein "The Cinematgographic Principle and the Ideogram" in *Film Form* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1949 and in paperback edition by Meridian Books, 1957), 37-40.

[516] Eisenstein, "The Cinematgographic Principle and the Ideogram," 37-40.

montage as collision reflects a mainstream approach among artists and architects who had their foundation or exposure to Agit art.

Rowe and Koetter in their critique of modernist architects offer the following alternative, "A truly useful dialectic? Is one where the collisions of points of view exist and are made visible. One ought to seek collision of interests in a permanent state of debate."[517] It is worth noting that such a collision needs no orchestration as the city is always up for debate and moreover, the architects working in the fabric of an already existing city cannot but help to work in a state of debate.

One should remember the dynamic relationships created when new construction stands side by side with existing architecture like Barkhin's *Izvestiia,* which stands on Pushkin Square. As a disseminator of information and propaganda, the building and its function as a news agency stood facing, as if in opposition, the old ideological remnant—represented by the *Stastnoi Monestary*. In a reminder to architects and artists, Eisenstein writes, "In themselves, the pictures, the phases, the elements of the whole are innocent and indecipherable. The blow is struck only when the elements are juxtaposed into a sequential image." [518] The drama unfolds in both sequence and in juxtaposition.

Adolf Hildebrand, whose work *The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture* was translated into Russian in 1914 and was a required reading at VKhUTEMAS,

[517] Rowe and Koetter, *Collage City,* 106.

[518] Yve-Alain Bois, "Sergei M. Eisenstein: Montage and Architecture," *Assemblage* 10, (December 1989): 128.

stressed the chronological succession of visual impressions (from distant to close-up views) could be adapted to architecture.[519] Senkevich believes the Rationalists, particularly Ladovskii, was influenced by Hildebrand's theories which consider that form and space can only be comprehended through a sequence of time and movement. This cinematic-like approach vivifies the viewer within the city, like an actor that reacts to the mise-en-scène. The inhabitants of the city, according to Hildebrand and Ladovskii are not passive observers, but co-creators with their environment. The architect's goal was to compose a space that would facilitate this "kinesthetic" perception.[520]

For Ladovskii and the other Rationalists, namely Dokuchaev, their awareness of the space-time relationship in perception, led them to orchestrate architecture, which allowed viewers to comprehend the "spatial relationships among the intricate dimensions of streets, blocks, and building ensembles." Dokuchaev stressed the importance of this goal, as this is especially important for the "contemporary consumer who does not contemplate a building in its entirety, but passes or rides speedily by large constructions buildings, blocks, etc." He continued, "Since we perceive architectural ensembles gradually as we approach, pass by, and move away from its principal architectural forms,

[519] Senkevich, *Trends in Soviet Architectural Thought, 1917-32: The Growth and Decline of the Constructivist and Rationalist Movements*, 302.

[520] Senkevich, *Trends in Soviet Architectural Thought, 1917-32: The Growth and Decline of the Constructivist and Rationalist Movements*, 363.

the very architectural method of designing for this gradual sequence of perception through time must consider and solve these problems."[521]

Ladovskii found it hard not to believe a distinct architect would not know the meaning his form was meant to inspire within the viewer. "Is it possible" he asks "that an architect constructing a form would not know how it would be perceived by the observer?"[522] It was important to facilitate the observer's orientation to one's surroundings by developing a more dynamic way of suggesting order and measure of spatial form that Ladovskii described as *geometrichskaia vyrazitelnost formye* (geometric expressiveness of form). Along with element-*priznaki* or elements-symbols, an architect could communicate to the viewer a relationship between adjoining visible surfaces.[523] The importance of his assertion is the belief that an architect manipulates a relationship of forms and buildings to create dynamic associations within the viewer. "The observer," asserts Senkevich, "became an integral part of the new architectural image, which was intended to become once more a dynamic spatial experience instead of a lifeless inventory of traditional architectural elements."[524]

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[521] Dokuchaev, "Sovermennaia russkaya arhkitektura zapadnye paralleli," II, 12 quoted in Senkevich, *Trends in Soviet Architectural Thought, 1917-32: The Growth and Decline of the Constructivist and Rationalist Movements*, 386.

[522] Senkevich, *Trends in Soviet Architectural Thought, 1917-32: The Growth and Decline of the Constructivist and Rationalist Movements*, 344. From Ladovskii, "Osnovy postroeniia teorii arhitektury," 4.

[523] Senkevich, *Trends in Soviet Architectural Thought, 1917-32: The Growth and Decline of the Constructivist and Rationalist Movements*, 344-345.

[524] Senkevich, *Trends in Soviet Architectural Thought, 1917-32: The Growth and Decline of the Constructivist and Rationalist Movements*, 347-352. See also footnote 61.

Let us consider the viewer or city dweller walking along Miassnitskaia. The first striking encounter is the *Gostorg'*s (Ministry of Trade) juxtaposition against bourgeois estates, but the full impact, or that "blow" that Eisenstein described would occur when they reached the crescendo of the street—*Tzentrosoyuz*. The street and the tiny little neoclassical wing of the Soldatenkov estate are dwarfed by the behemoth that Hans Meyer described as an "orgy of glass and concrete" (fig. 67).[525]

The architectural examples I have provided and Kuleshov's experiments speak to relationships, which are forged in a viewer's mind either by conflict or simply by a quieter layering. The ability for audiences to synthesize and connect disparate geographic and even fantastical elements in Kuleshov's experiments speaks to the potential for city dwellers to likewise grasp the elements of a city, disparate or fragmented as they may be. Despite the randomness of scenes and their lack of an internal narrative, audiences managed to connect the material as a coherent whole. After habituation, even fragmentation is identified and organized. Objects seen for the first time may appear familiar as they conform to some set of stereotypes. I agree with Benjamin, who wrote, "As regards architecture, habit determines to a large extent even optical reception. The human apparatus of perception is mastered gradually by habit."[526] Indeed, habituation turns conflict into resolution as one comes to a resolve within a dialectical exchange. The fragmented city, much like Kuleshov's experiments with montage, forms a symphonic ensemble.

[525] Cohen, *Mystique of the USSR*, 49.

[526] Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," 240.

Did montage achieve or does it have the potential to achieve the properties that filmmakers desired? Kuleshov's experiment suggests that two seemed to fuse into one, or at least were comprehended as a whole. In other words, the disparate relationships, such as the film frames or architectural relationships—or more generally speaking, ideologies— may appear to be separate, but eventually, are subsumed by the status quo.

Conclusion

A paperwork error led me to investigate the origins of this project and to the discovery that I started far off from where I ended. I was originally drawn to the concept of the "ruins" of modernity, having seen an image of *Zil Palace of Culture*, a modern complex designed by the Vesnin brothers, which stands next to a remnant of a monastery. I found this relationship intriguing, much the same way I found the functional building amidst historical archetypes in St. Petersburg intriguing. I wondered why Soviet architects created such architectural contrasts with neighboring buildings. Contrasts are, by no means, unique to Soviet cities, and when I first conceived of the dissertation, I did not distinguish between Soviet sites and other European sites. For me, they shared modernist properties that highlighted the ruins of bourgeois culture. After some thought, I came to the inevitable conclusion: context does matter. Details matter. After all, not all modernists are socialist and socialists are not alike and by extension, modernist sites in Berlin, for example, would have little in common with modernist sites in Moscow, even if they share a similar style. My dissertation stresses the very rudimentary point that contextual specificity is essential to the creation and reception of architecture.

I had had the realization a few years into my dissertation that I could no write about the honest interrogation of context without going to Moscow's archives again and looking into the negotiation that architects had with official branches of Moscow's

bureaucracy.[527] I was aware of cases, such as Velikovskii's plan for *Gostorg,* where plans to build a tower were not approved by the city. I could not write about the ideological theories influencing Soviet artists and architects without understanding how city officials dictated or limited aesthetic production. This is yet another entry point that I make into the scholarship of Soviet architecture. Architects, as I argue with Velikovskii in chapter three, were subject to larger wishes and concerns driving Soviet society. As one example, Velikovskii had to consider the glare the windows of *Gostorg* might cause. Such tangible concerns reflect a sensitivity, not just by architects, but also by official branches to consider city-dwellers and their experience. I was impressed by the care taken by the main city engineer and the main city architect to concern themselves with the comfort of the workers working at Gostorg. I make another case that I believe is useful and one that I have not seen made in scholarship on Soviet architecture. Architecture is not an independent entity, and to better understand its aesthetic and practical function, one must consider it within the social and political framework that it occupies.[528]

Shortly after the revolution, as I demonstrated in chapter one, artists, architects, and cultural critics struggled for decades to locate workers' taste and to communicate to the masses. They went from abstract "universal" geometries where red triangles beat out white circles (El Lissitzky) and squares replaced the sun (Malevich). These neo-Kantians,

[527] Looking back, I must have been influenced by the negotiation between city magistrates and the artist, made apparent by Christo and Jeanne-Claude.

[528] The most egregious example that comes to mind is Pare's *The Lost Vanguard: Russian Modernist Architecture 1922-1932*.

as Constructivists and fellow modernists labeled them, were too focused on abstract theories and ideals that were not congruent with material reality—the stuff of everyday life. Symbolic formalism was akin to spiritual symbolism. The taste of the worker then shifted towards functional formalism, and artists turned into constructors. Eventually, that obsession with functionality turned into its own kind of worship—a "mecanomania." [529] Pure formalism had run its course and was replaced by figurative art that showed workers at work. Why is it that classical architecture could embody the social ideals of egalitarianism for the French Revolution, but failed to do so during Stalin's tenure? Likewise, how is non-objective art any more reflective of the worker than figurative art? Benjamin was aware of the shallow guises, remarking:

> The French Revolution viewed itself as Rome reincarnate. It evoked ancient Rome the way fashion evokes costumes of the past. Fashion has a flair for the topical, no matter where it stirs in the thickets of long ago; it is a tiger's leap into the past. This jump, however, takes place in an arena where the ruling class gives the commands. The same leap in the open air of history is the dialectical one, which is how Marx understood the revolution.[530]

While working on the dissertation, I kept asking myself questions that are largely forgotten or taken for granted. Namely, does art actually work? The subtext to my project has been a nagging question about the nature of subjectivity and the question of

[529] People used to joke that the main character in Soviet films was a tractor, or tractors. In Raymond Williams' *The Politics of Modernism*, 114.

[530] Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History" in *Illuminations*, 261.

whether or not visual form even has the capacity to transform our sense of being. As an art historian, I have invested years in the study of art and architecture, assuming all along that visual culture can profoundly affect an individual, and even possibly transform them.[531]

The concerted effort made by Soviet artists and architects to communicate and transform a population tests the ability of art to do what we have believed it capable of doing; in other words, does a combination of colors, lines and forms affects the viewer. Similarly, I asked if a socialist city could change human behavior, or at least, be *conducive* to particular forms of human behavior? Official Soviet ideology held that under capitalism, true, natural human behavior was commodified and obscured as a result of capitalism.[532] A socialist city, on the other hand, would expose human beings to the actual material conditions of their lives.

Scholars who have written on the Soviet socialist "experiment" stress that socialist life was meant to "transform" the human condition.[533] Such goals, if they were, indeed, the goals of socialism, would be utopian in nature. I have argued, however, that

[531] The numerous phases of iconoclasm would confirm the potential of visual culture to, at least, upset a population.

[532]One needs only to read the numerous critiques in *Sovremennaia Arhitektura* and *Sovetskaia Arhitektura* to understand this picture.

[533]See Boris Groys', "A Style and a Half: Socialist Realisms between Modernism and Postmodernism" in *Socialist Realism Without Shores*, eds. Thomas Lahusen and Evgeny Dobrenko (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 76-90. "Communism represented the transition, in Marxian terms, from the description of the world to its transformation by the `interior,' authentic demands of man," 77-78. Groys complicates the notion of Modernism in the Soviet Union from that of the West in that the Soviets did not have the same interests in making the distinction between low and high art.

when Marxist principles were actually understood by the Soviets, they were not about a utopian transformation, but rather an *awakening* to what was *real*.[534] I could have taken a more cynical approach and questioned what it means to identify the real, but that is a question beyond the scope of this project. And after all, the "real" material conditions of daily life are always historically contingent. Tomorrow, I would be wrong.

One might argue that even the desire to locate a specific, stable "real" *is* actually a utopian endeavor. Fair enough, but the tense debates expressed in contemporary literature suggest that Soviet theorists were not very clear about the precise nature of "socialist life" or "socialist architecture." There were no blue-prints or certainty. Is it then reasonable to qualify this uncertainty as—utopian? Perhaps, the only "real" is recognizing the heterogeneous response to life in a constant state of flux. This reality, in accordance with Marx, would show that there are no static architectural features, neither for socialism nor for capitalism. No wonder Marx and Engels eschewed visualizing cities of the future, seeing it illusory to make plans without knowing the conditions that would be necessary to realize them.[535]

In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels clarified, "Communism is not for us a state of affairs which is to be established, an ideal to which reality will have to adjust

[534] Ancient Greeks, particularly Aristotle, had faith in the power of the polis as that which reflects the hopes and aspirations as rational humans capable of constructing a rational social order. Man was to be not of the woods but contra the woods. The rationale being that stood against the beast, or the irrational impulses. And such, the rational man lived in cities, built not by nature but by man and controlled by man.

[535] Choay, *The Modern City: Planning in the 19th Century*, 32.

itself. We call communism the real movement which abolishes the present state of things. The conditions of this movement result from the premises now in existence."[536] It is absurd to think of communism or, capitalism for that matter, as closed systems that will never adapt. Indeed, they have. I do not see this as failure of a kind; rather, it is reflective of dynamic conditions. This ought to explain why I took a strong position in my dissertation against the label of Utopia, frequently applied to avant-garde practices shortly after the revolution. The modern condition of transience and change is not inevitably utopian; it just is what it is.

If one lives long enough, it is quite possible one may experience the function of a building in its different phases or uses— perhaps an experience of a library that has been converted to an office building or, quite commonly, a stately home has been turned into a funeral home. Rem Koolhaas suggested in his "Life in the Metropolis," "No single specific function can be matched with a single place. Through this destabilization it is possible to absorb the 'change that is life' by continuously rearranging functions on the individual platforms in an incessant process of adaptation . . . ."[537] I agree and suggest that the best way to comprehend the Soviet modern experience is to not view it as a particular expression of forms, but rather, the antagonism of them.

During and shortly after the revolution, artists and filmmakers used agitational art to engage the population. As Lunacharskii pointed out that, "[agitational art should be]

[536] Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, 162.

[537]Rem Koolhaas, "Life in the Metropolis" *Architectural Design*, 1977, no 5. Quoted in *Back from Utopia, The challenge of the Modern Movement*, Hubert-Jan Henket and Hilde Heynen eds, (010 Publishers, Rotterdam, 2002), 12.

distinguished from propaganda by the fact that it excites the feelings of the audience and readers and has a direct influence on their will."[538] There are a number of ways art can be agitational and provocative. I need not cite the numerous possibilities. Instead, I offer Lunacharskii's perspective:

> Those art forms that have arisen only recently as, for example, the cinema or rhythmics, can be used with very great effect. It is ridiculous to enlarge upon the propaganda and agitational strength of the cinema—it is obvious to anyone. And just think what character our festive occasions will take on when, by means of General Military Instruction, we create rhythmically moving masses embracing thousands and thousands of people—and not just a crowd, but a strictly regulated, collective, peaceful army sincerely possessed by one definite idea.[539]

Lunacharskii's vision creates a powerful image of a population of spectators who are also actors in the mise-en-scène of the city. There is an interesting twist to this plot line that is fundamental to understanding the Soviet experience of the modern that I cover in chapter five. Soviet city-dwellers "performing" life would not be acting out their roles within Hollywood films, built on false reality; instead they would be living out life as it was—rhythmically and continually unfolding.

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[538] Lunacharskii, "Revolution and Art"(1920-22):191-192.

[539] Lunacharskii "Revolution and Art"(1920-22): 192.

The notion of living out *real* life, as opposed to a false Hollywood one, meant that one was aware and cognizant of the life one was living. At the very least, Marx had hoped to awaken the slumbering masses into action. Soviet artists understood this necessity by utilizing agitational methods. My dissertation proposed that we must recognize that there were similar efforts made by Soviet architects to agitate or, better, to "awaken" Moscow's city-dwellers to their material reality. In order to make this point, I demonstrated in chapter three how modernist buildings stood almost rudely in opposition to their surroundings. I had, myself, experienced this irritation with a building in St. Petersburg that failed to join the polite society of its neighbors. This gesture may appear antagonistic, but that is precisely why it worked on me. The contrast between the buildings made me pause and analyze the space. As Marx argued in 1856: "In our days everything is pregnant with its contrary."[540] The readers of Marx and, let us include Walter Benjamin, recognized that within modernity the dialectic between the old and the new, vacillating between "petrified nature" (seeming stability or stasis expressed by classicism) and the shock of the new were powerful antagonists. No wonder these oppositional forces were evident in Soviet film and architecture.

I argued that dialectical materialism expressed by antagonisms and contradictions was not only a guiding theory for filmmakers like Lev Kuleshov, Dziga Vertov and Sergei Eisenstein, but also a rationale for architects. I recommend that the reader consider dialectical materials as the means to understanding the disjointed and

[540] Marx, "Speech at the anniversary of the *People's Paper*" in *Marx-Engels Reader*, 577.

fragmented experience of the Soviet modern. In combining viewer and dweller experience of the city with that of theories of perception, including montage, I hoped to show that the jarring or contrasting features of modernist buildings within Moscow functioned like dialectical devices, akin to montage. I propose that we view Moscow of the 1920s and 1930s as a film-reel, made up of juxtaposed images, operating, not like a dreamscape, but rather like a conscious experience of the ongoing material conditions that determine life.

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Mayakovskii' "Автобусом по Москве"

Десять прошло.
Понимаете?
Десять!
Как же ж
поэтам не стараться?
Как
на театре
актерам не чудесить?
Как
не литься
лавой демонстраций?
Десять лет -
сразу не минуют.
Десять лет -
ужасно много!
А мы
вспоминаем
любую из минут.
С каждой
минутой
шагали в ногу.

Кто не помнит только
переулок
Орликов?!
В семнадцатом
из Орликова
выпускали голенькова.
А теперь
задираю голову мою
на Запад
и на Восток,
на Север
и на Юг.
Солнцами
окон
сияет Госторг,
Ваня
и Вася -
иди,

одевайся!

Полдома
на Тверской
(Газетного угол).
Всю ночь
и день-деньской -
сквозь окошки
вьюга.
Этот дом
пустой
орал
на всех:
- Гражданин,
стой!
Руки вверх! -
Не послушал окрика, -
от тебя -
мокренько.
Дом -
теперь:
огня игра.
Подходи хоть ночью
ты!
Тут
тебе
телеграф -
сбоку почты.
Влю-
блен
весь-
ма -
вмес-
то
пись-
ма
к милке
прямо
шли телеграммы.

На Кузнецком
на мосту,
где дома

сейчас
растут, -
помню,
было:
пала
кобыла,
а толпа
над дохлой
голодная
охала,
А теперь
магазин
горит
для разинь.
Ваня
наряден.
Идет,
и губа его
вся
в шоколаде
с фабрики Бабаева.

Вечером
и поутру,
с трубами
и без труб -
подымал
невозможный труд
улиц
разрушенных
труп,
Под скромностью
ложной
радость не тая,
ору
с победителями
голода и тьмы:
- Это -
я!
Это -
мы!

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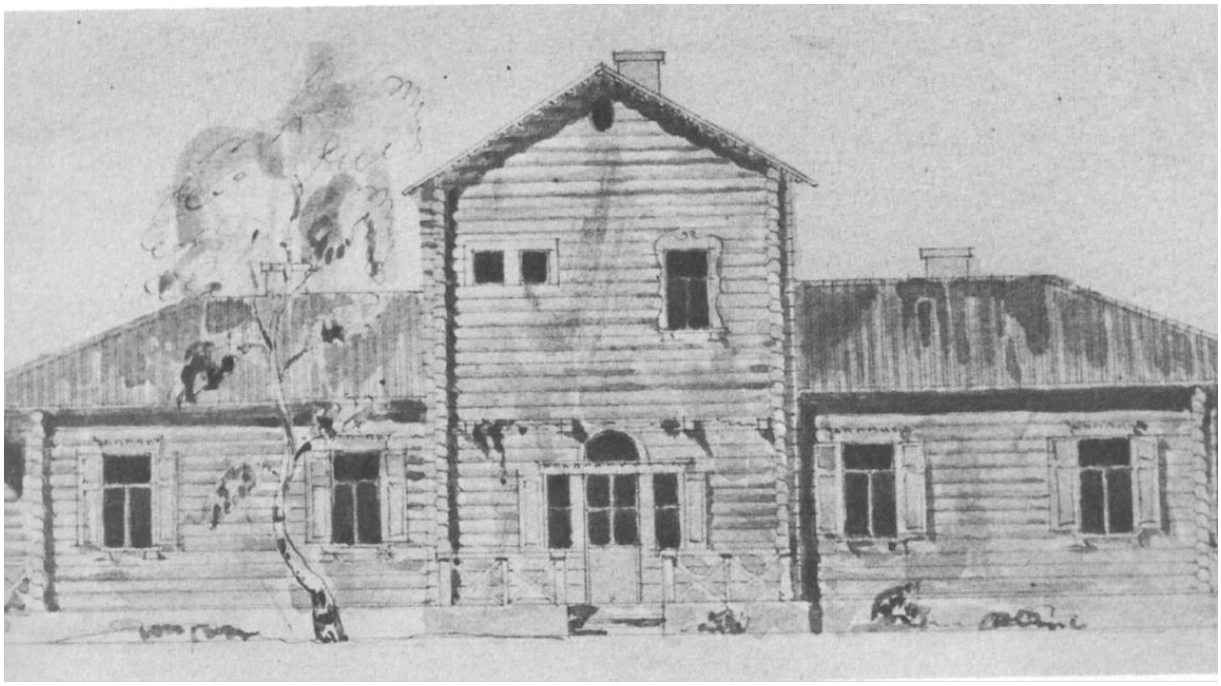

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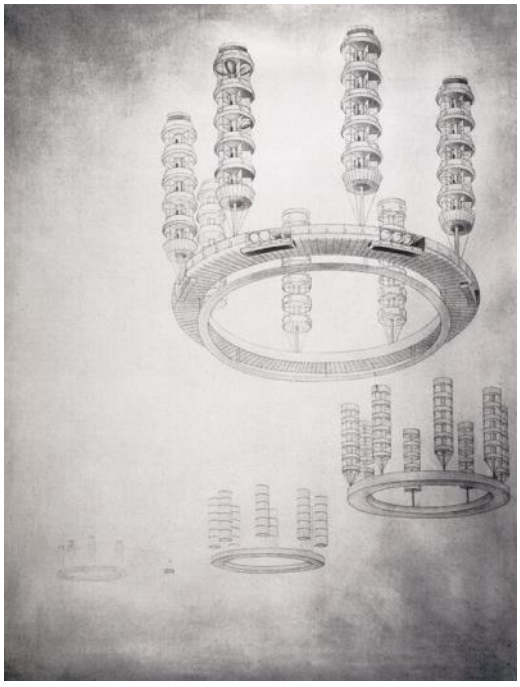

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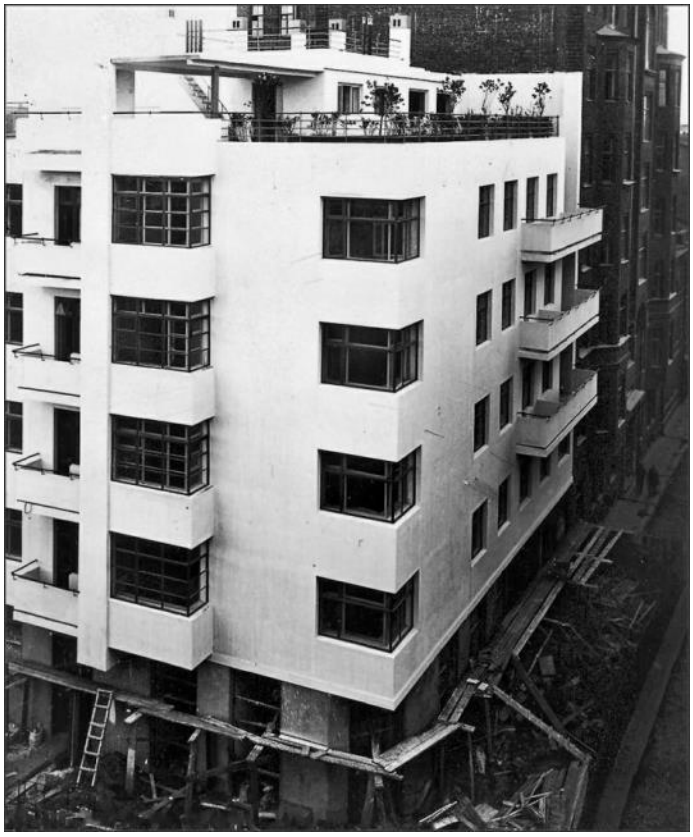

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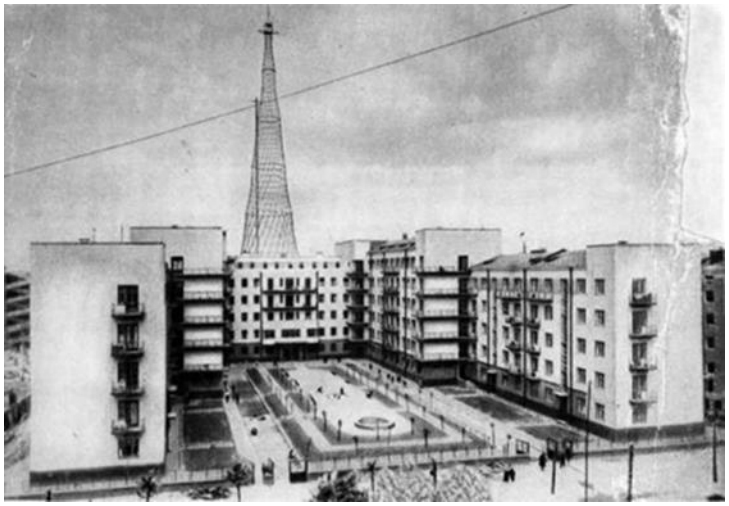

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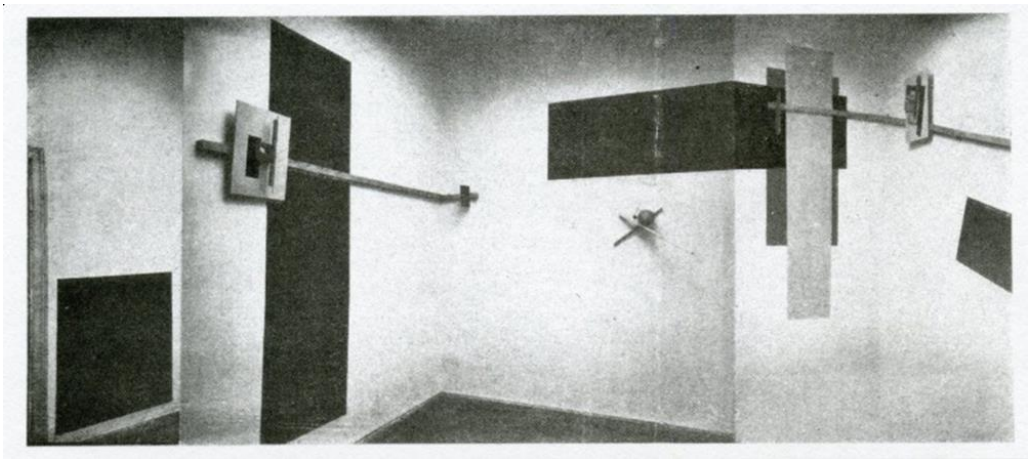

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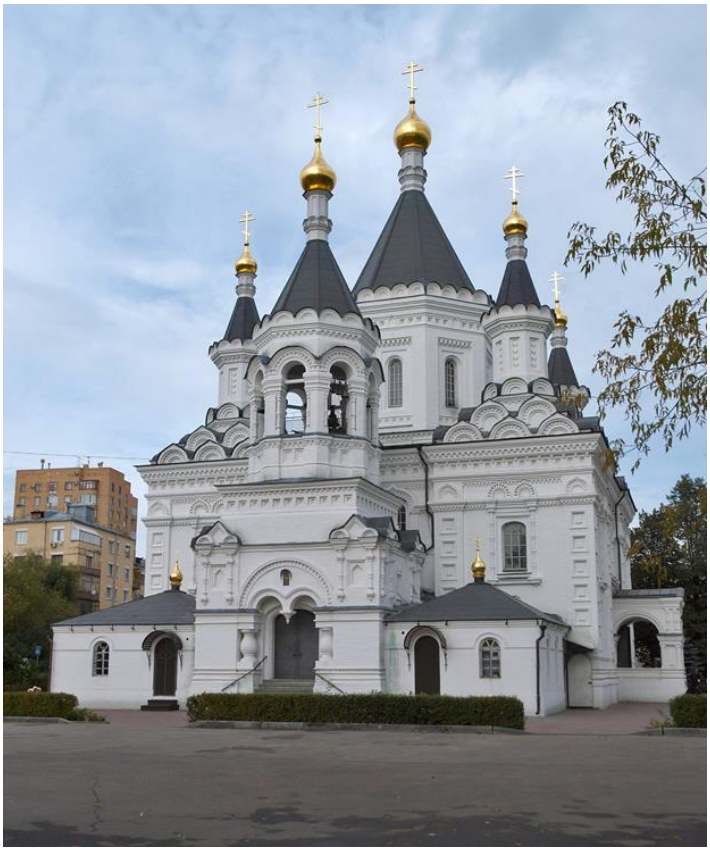

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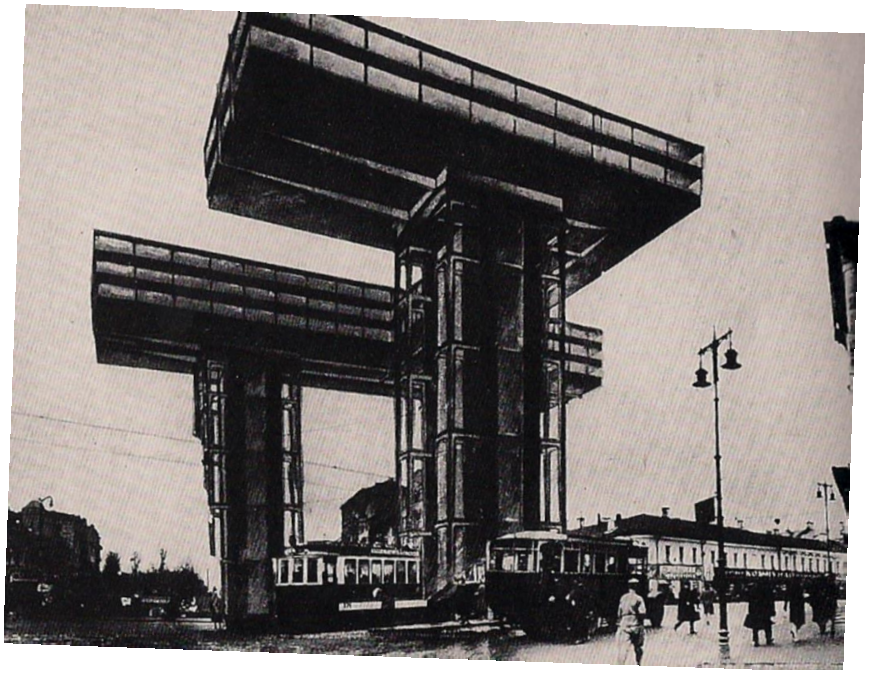

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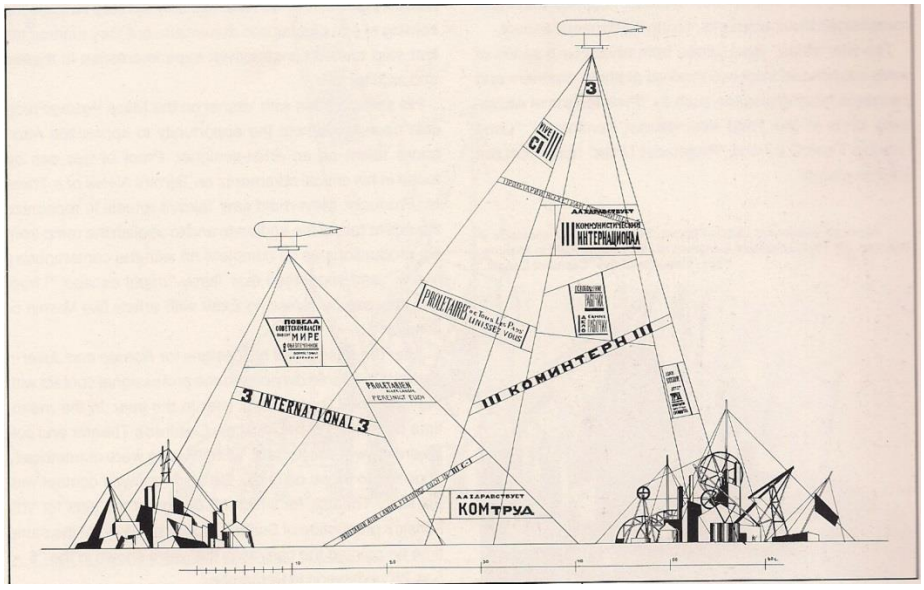

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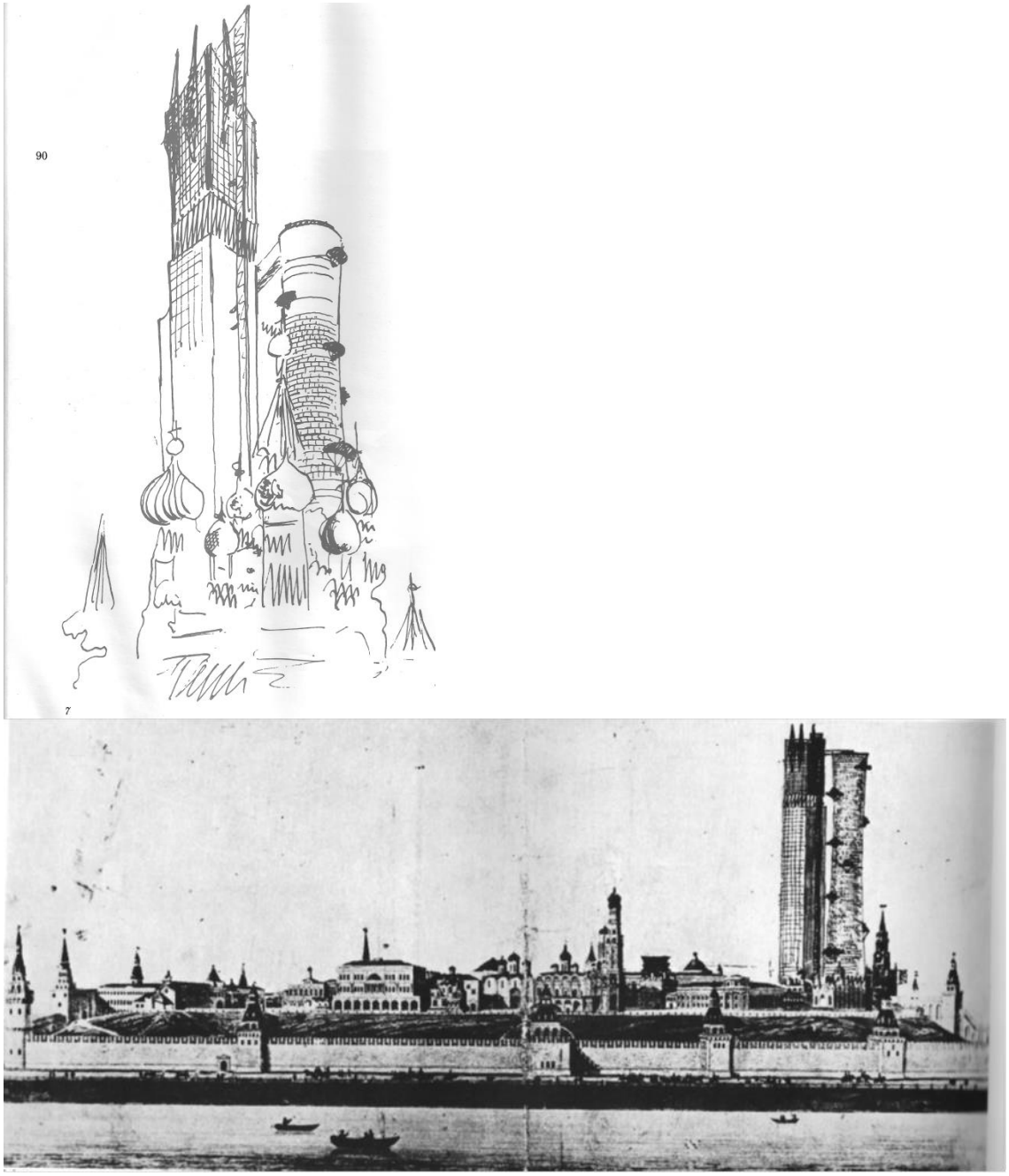

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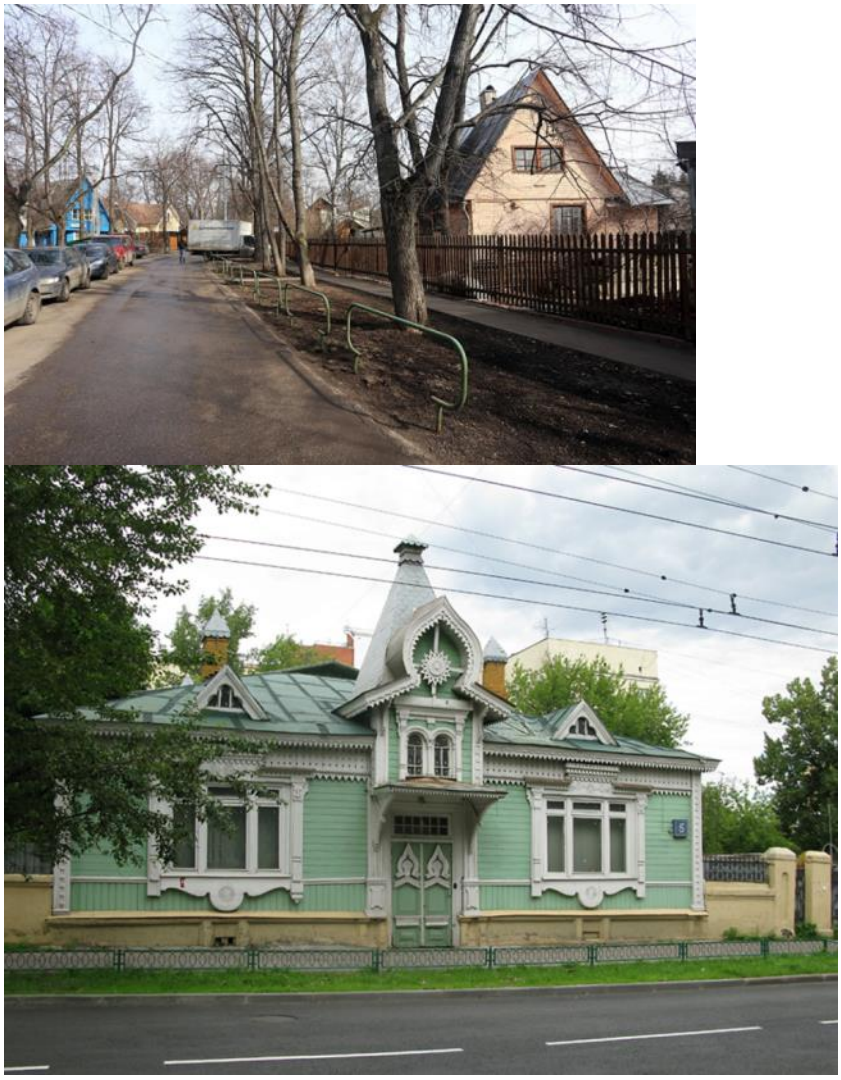

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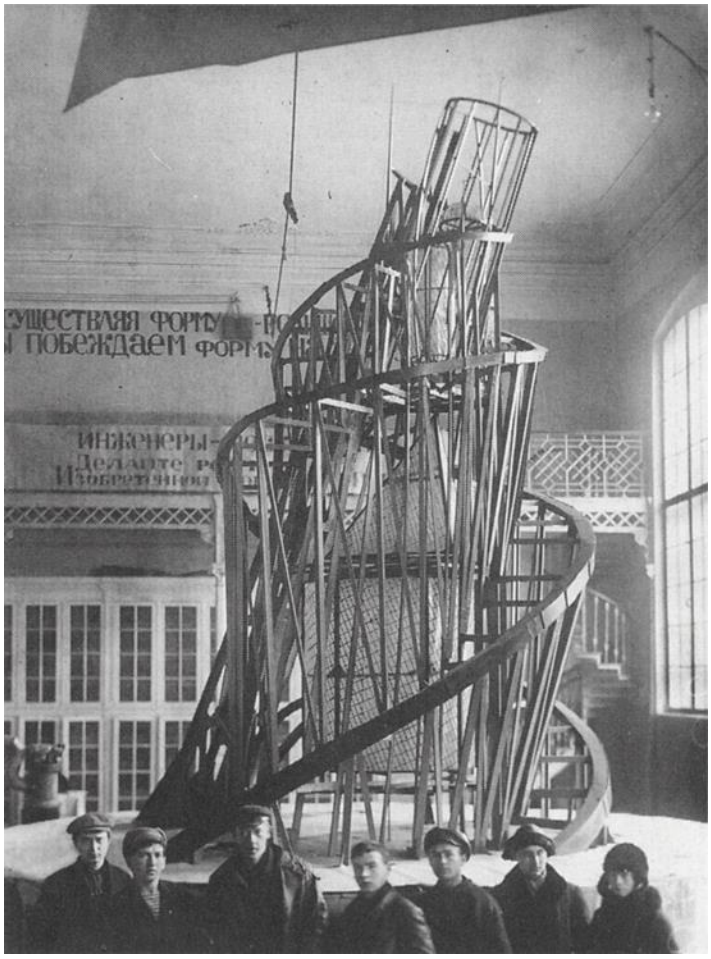

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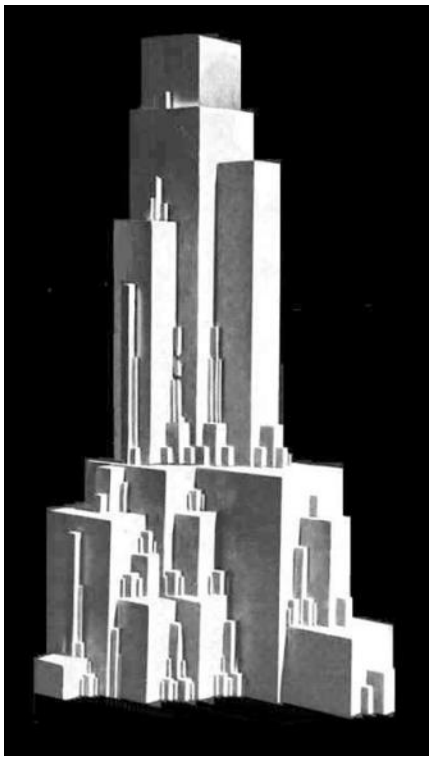

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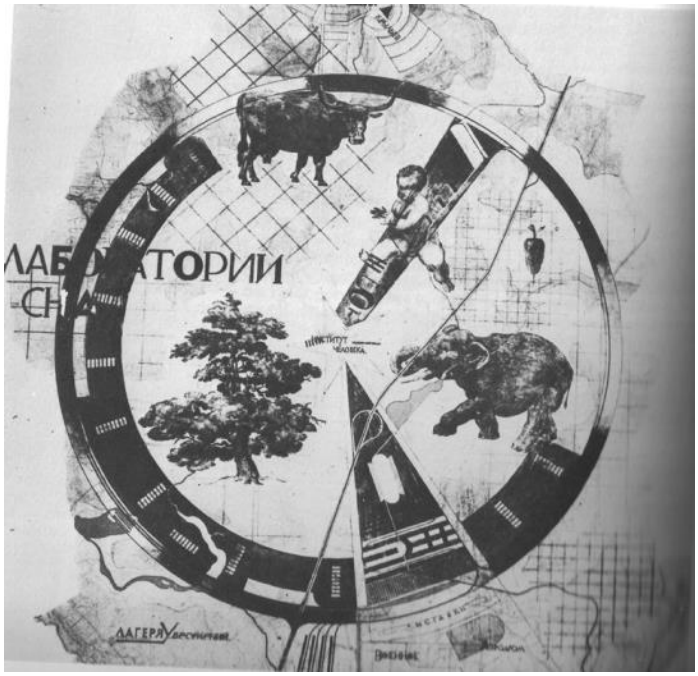

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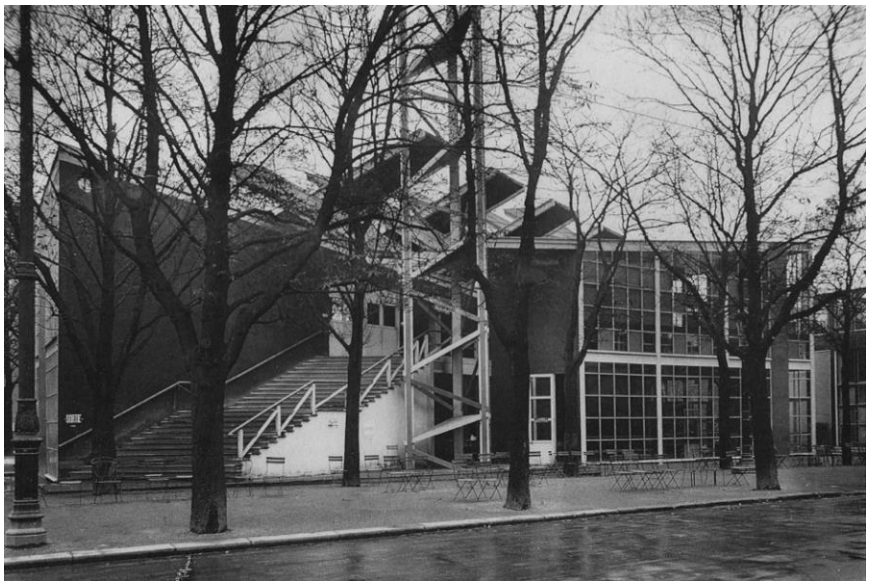

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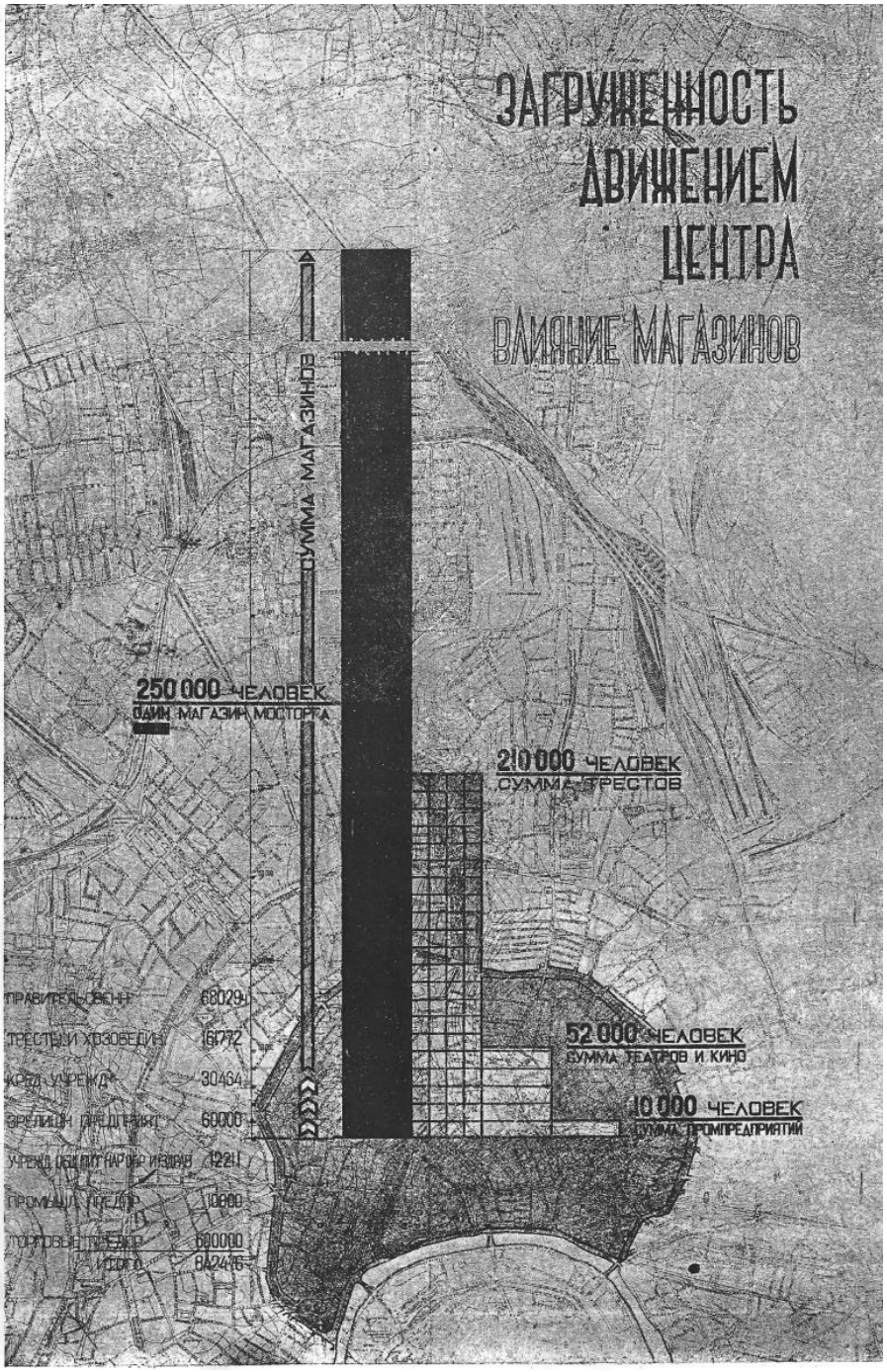

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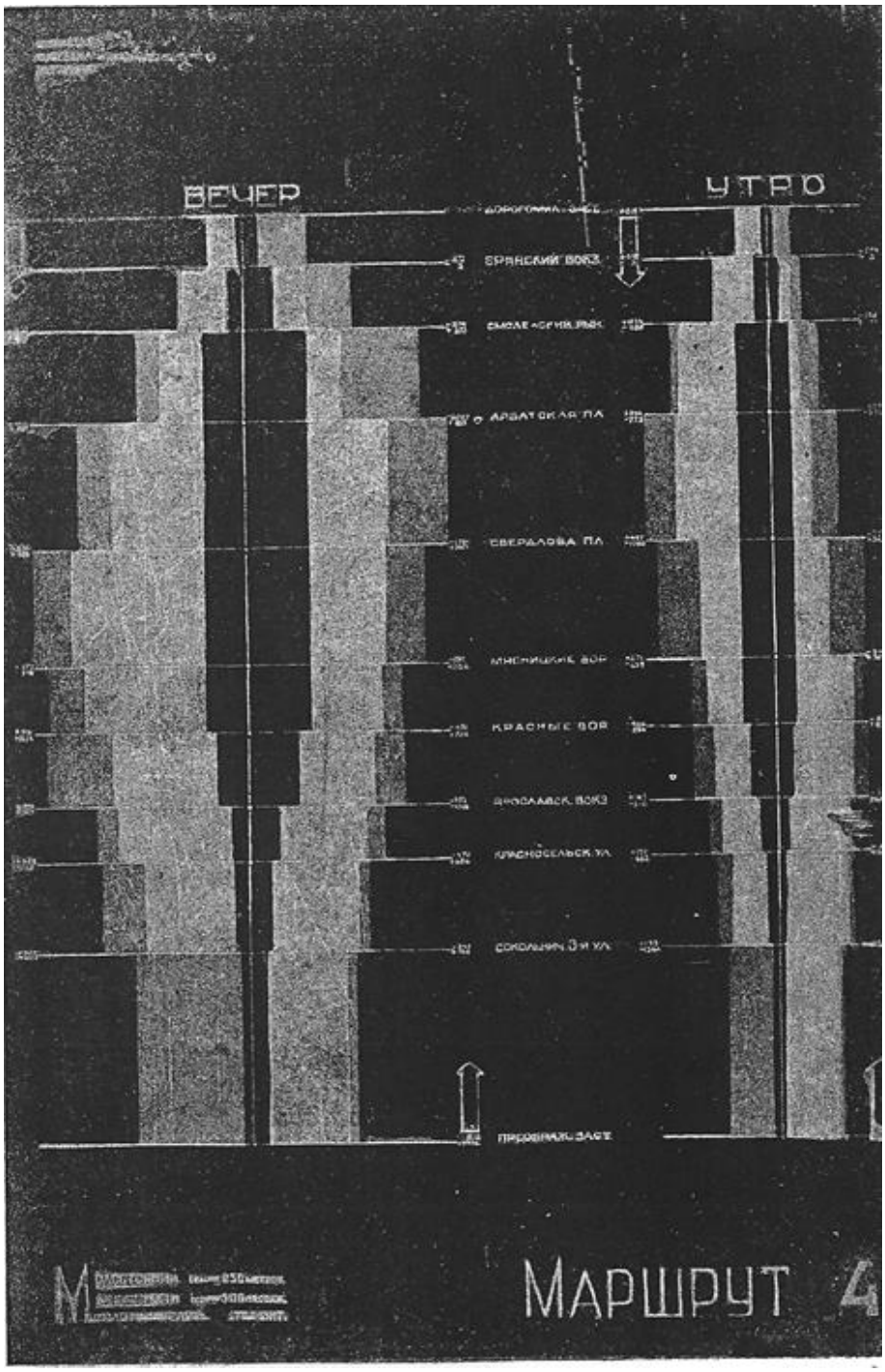

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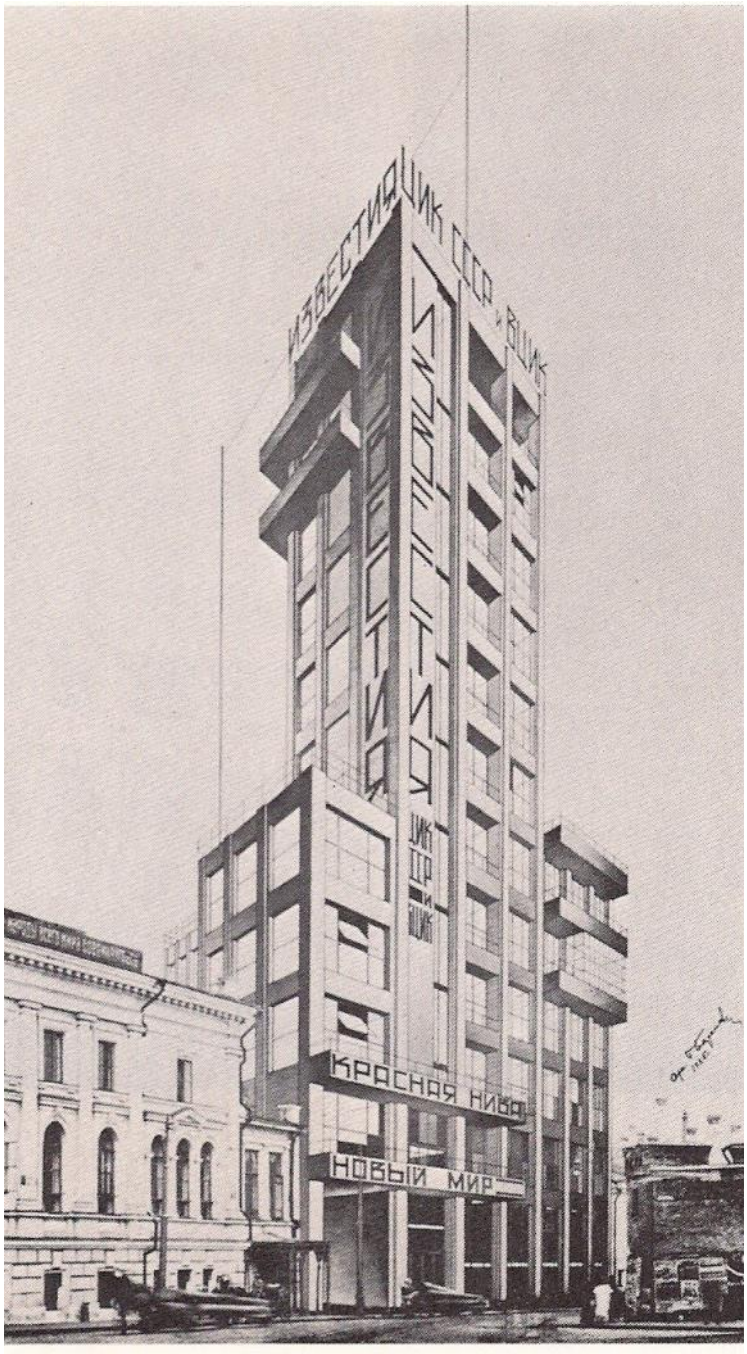

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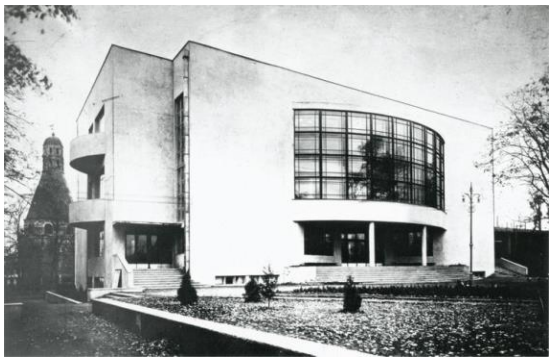

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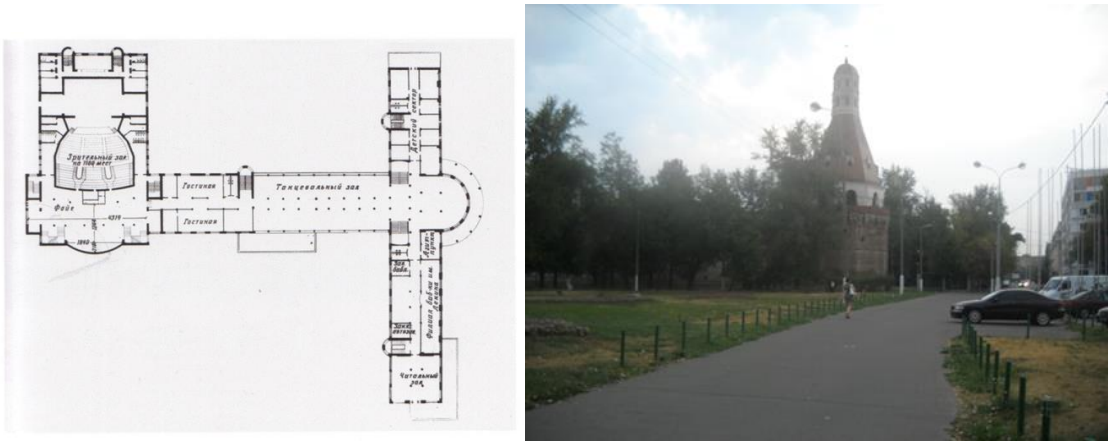

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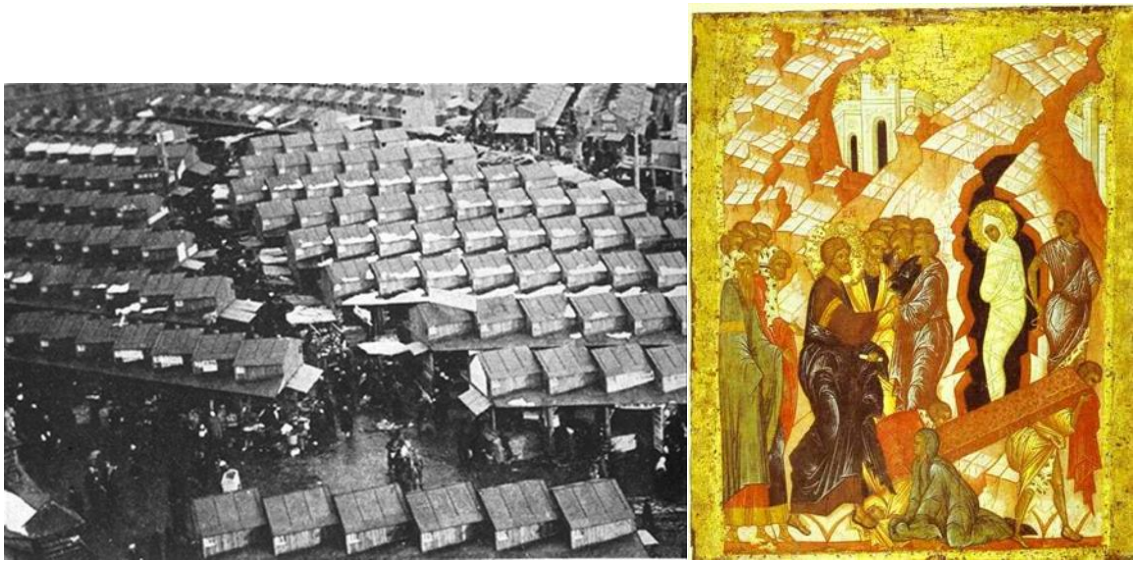

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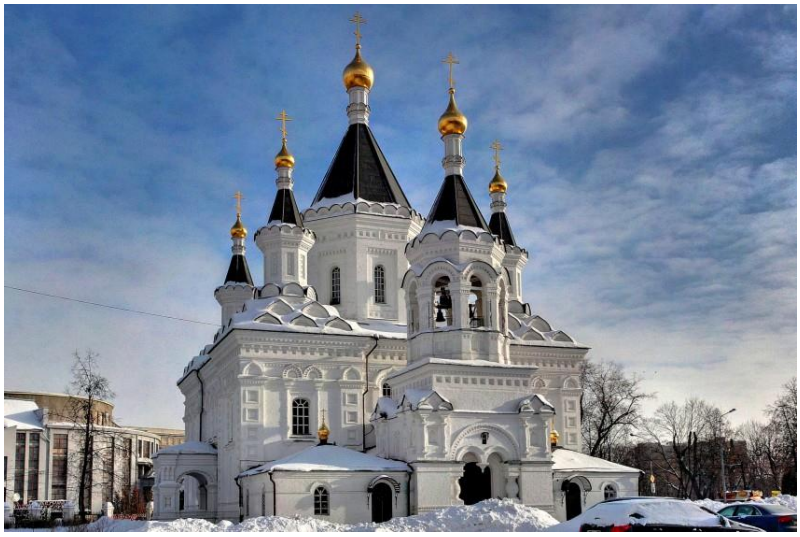

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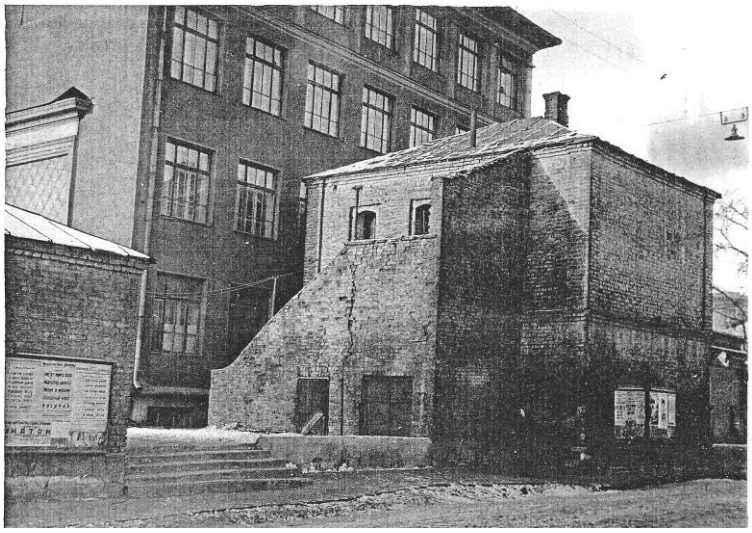

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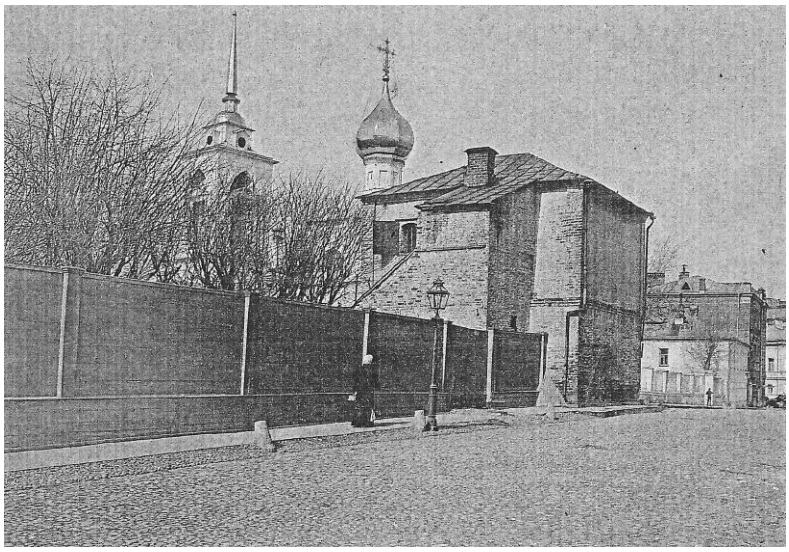

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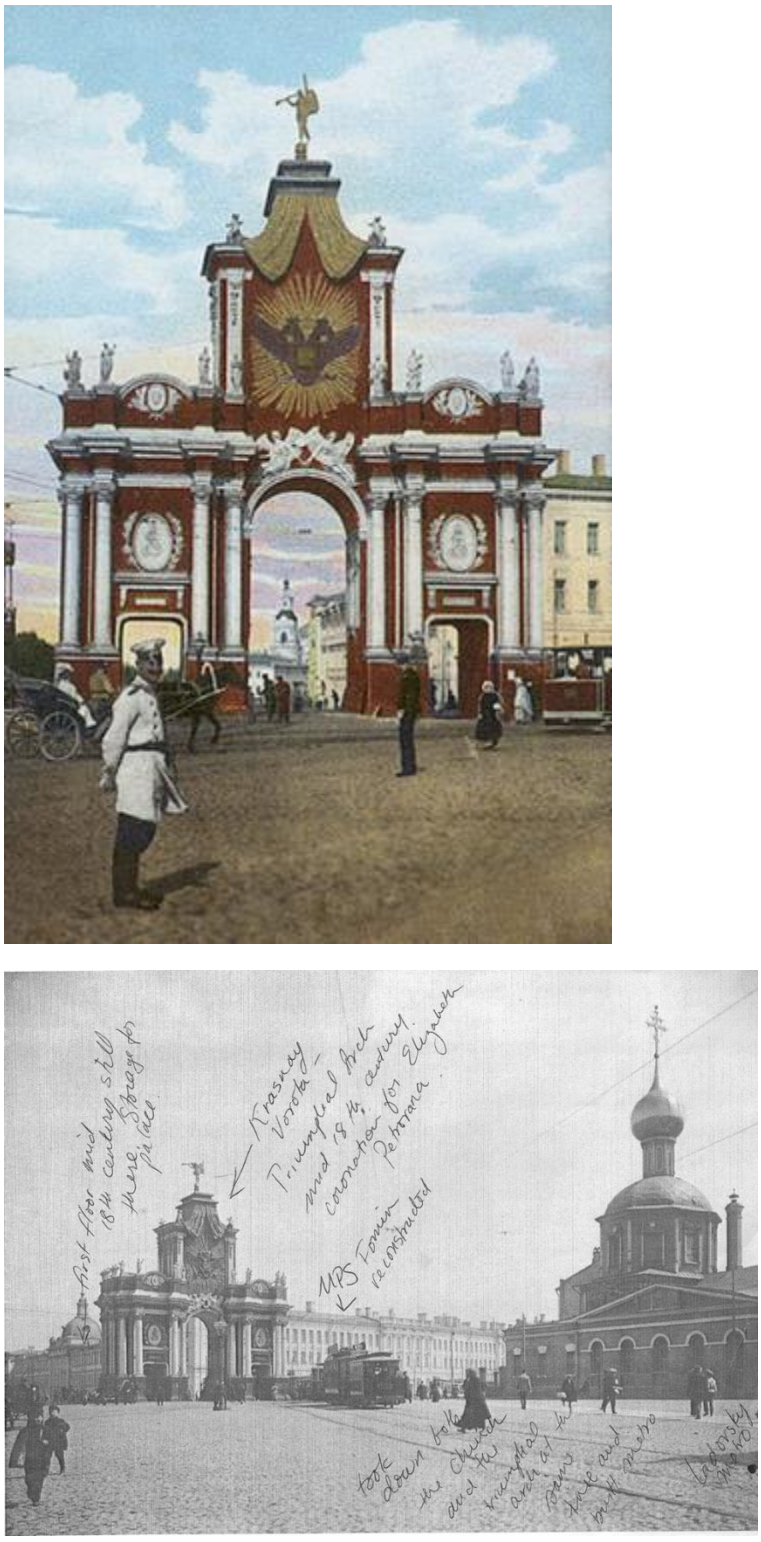

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4020 II "Capital of New Culture." Showing no room at the library; all the tables are occupied. People are reading Lenin and Marx. Narrator: "Soon, you will not recognize Moscow." Metro is being built. *Dinamo* is shown at full capacity. (1931-1935)

3891 II Scenes of old and new parts of Tashkent. Narrator: "Reconstruction of Moscow that Stalin initiated in the capital of U.S.S.R. is transformed into a magnificent modern city. View of Kremlin, cars, vistas of rivers, roads, kids in school (in French) (date unspecified, ca 1930s)

3604 III Scenes include Golosov's *Zuev club*, peasants throwing out their icons. Narrator: "Getting adjusted to socialist culture." Communal kitchens are shown, communal laundromats, children in kindergarten (unspecified date, ca 1920s)

3771 III/a Scenes of meetings, people at home; man at home gets dressed and walks into a Constructivist style club (unspecified date, 1920s-1930s)

3771 III/b Scenes of children in a building; piano playing; kids working, learning carpentry, scene of village, wooden homes, muddy roads. Narrator: "With the growth of the country and Moscow's environs, so too grew the infrastructure."

32255 Film on Konstantin Mel'nikov. Shows a group of architects who discuss Mel'nikov's early works and the waning of his style and the "battle with formalism." Debate about Utopia. (1987) (author: O. Sviblova, director: Z. Fomina)

Arhitektura SSSR [Architecture of the U.S.S.R.], 1933-91
Izvestiia, [News] newspaper
Izvestiia ASNOVA [ASNOVA News], 1926
Kino Fot [Film Photo]
Konstruktzye Moskvye, [Construction of Moscow]
Pravda, [Truth] newspaper
Sovremennaia arhitektura [Contemporary Architecture], 1926-30
Stroitel'stvo Moskvy [Construction of Moscow], 1924-41
Vechernaia Moskva [Evening Moscow] newspaper

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